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# SKETCHES FROM LIFE;

BY THE LATE

LAMAN BLANCHARD.

—

VOL I.







Laman Shuckar

# SKETCHES FROM LIFE;

BY THE LATE

~~Samuel~~ LAMAN BLANCHARD:

**With a Memoir of the Author,**

BY

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

EMBELLISHED WITH A PORTRAIT, AFTER A DRAWING BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A.,  
AND SEVERAL WOOD ENGRAVINGS, FROM DESIGNS BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK,  
KENNY MEADOWS, AND FRANK STONE.

**Second Edition.**

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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the men who, in our day, have chosen literature as their profession, the name of Laman Blanchard brings recollections of peculiar tenderness and regret. Amidst a career which the keenness of anxious rivalry renders a sharp probation to the temper and the affections, often yet more embittered by that strife of party, of which, in a Representative Constitution, few men of letters escape the eager passions and the angry prejudice—they recal the memory of a competitor, without envy; a partisan, without gall; firm, as the firmest, in the maintenance of his own opinions; but gentle as the gentlest in the judgment he passed on others.

Who, among our London brotherhood of letters, does not miss that simple cheerfulness—that inborn and exquisite urbanity—that child-like readiness to be pleased with all—that happy tendency to panegyrise every merit and to be lenient to every fault? Who does not recal that acute and delicate sensibility—so easily wounded, and therefore so careful not to wound—which seemed to infuse a certain intellectual fine breeding, of forbearance and sympathy, into every society where it insinuated its gentle way? Who, in convivial meetings, does not miss, and will not miss for ever, the sweetness of those unpretending talents—the earnestness of that honesty which seemed unconscious, it was worn so lightly—the mild influence of that exuberant kindness, which softened the acrimony of young disputants, and reconciled the secret animosities of jealous rivals? Yet few men had experienced more to sour them than Laman Blanchard, or had gone more resolutely through the author's hardening ordeal, of narrow circumstance, of daily labour, and of that disappointment in the higher aims of ambition, which must almost inevitably befall those who retain ideal standards of excellence, to be reached but by time and leisure, and who are yet condemned to draw hourly upon unmatured resources for the practical wants of life. To have been engaged from boyhood in such struggles, and to have preserved, undiminished, generous admiration for those more fortunate, and untiring love for his own noble yet thankless calling; and this with a constitution singularly finely strung, and with all the nervous irritability which usually accompanies the indulgence of the imagination: is a

proof of the rarest kind of strength, depending less upon a power purely intellectual, than upon the higher and more beautiful heroism which woman, and such men alone as have the best feelings of a woman's nature, take from instinctive enthusiasm for what is great, and uncalculating faith in what is good.

It is regarded thus, that the character of Laman Blanchard assumes an interest of a very elevated order. He was a choice and worthy example of the professional English men of letters of our day. He is not to be considered in the light of the man of daring and turbulent genius, living on the false excitement of vehement calumny and uproarious praise. His was a career not indeed obscure, but sufficiently quiet and unnoticed to be solaced with little of the pleasure with which, in aspirants of a noisier fame, gratified and not ignoble vanity rewards the labour and stimulates the hope. For more than twenty years he toiled on through the most fatiguing paths of literary composition, mostly in periodicals, often anonymously; pleasing and lightly instructing thousands, but gaining none of the prizes, whether of weighty reputation or popular renown, which more fortunate chances, or more pretending modes of investing talent, have given in our day to men of half his merits.

In his life are apparent many of the sores and evils peculiar to literary men in a country in which mind is regarded but as a common ware of merchandise; its products to be bought but by the taste and fashion of the public; with no resource in those provisions which elsewhere (and in Germany more especially) the state affords to such as quit the Agora for the Schools.



The institution of professional chairs in Germany has not only saved many a scholar from famine, many a genius from despair, but, by offering subsistence and dignity to that valuable class of writers whose learning and capacities unfit them, by reason of their very depth, for wide popularity, it has given worthy and profitable inducements to grave study, and, more than all else, has maintained the German fame for patient erudition, and profound philosophy. And this has been effected without the evils which free traders in literature have supposed the concomitants of the system; it has not lessened the boldness and originality of such authors as a Public alone can reward and appreciate; nor has it crushed, by the patronage of a State, the spirit of free inquiry and enlarged discussion. In England, the author who would live on his works can live only by the Public; in other words, by the desultory readers of light literature; and hence the inevitable tendency of our literary youth is towards the composition of works without learning and forethought. Leisure is impossible, to him who must meet the exigences of the day; much information of a refining and original kind is not for the multitude. The more imaginative rush to novels, and the more reflective fritter away their lives in articles for periodicals. Under such influences the author of these volumes lived and died.

SAMUEL LAMAN BLANCHARD was born of respectable parents in the middle class, at Great Yarmouth, on the 15th of May, 1803. His mother's maiden name was Mary Laman. She married first Mr. Cowell, at St. John's Church, Bermondsey, about the year 1796;

he died in the following year. In 1799, she was married again; to Samuel Blanchard; by whom she had seven children, but only one son, the third child, christened Samuel Laman.

In 1805, Mr. Blanchard (the father) appears to have removed to the metropolis, and to have settled in Southwark as a painter and glazier. He was enabled to give his boy a good education—an education, indeed, of that kind which could not but unfit young Laman for the calling of his father; for it developed the abilities and bestowed the learning, which may be said to lift a youth morally out of trade, and to refine him at once into a gentleman. At six years old he was entered a scholar of St. Olave's school, then under the direction of the Reverend Dr. Blenkorn. He became the head Latin scholar, and gained the chief prize in each of the last three years he remained at the academy. When he left, it was the wish of the master and trustees that he should be sent to college; one boy being annually selected from the pupils, to be maintained at the University, for the freshman's year, free of expence; for the charges of the two remaining years the parents were to provide. So strong, however, were the hopes of the master for his promising pupil, that the trustees of the school consented to depart from their ordinary practice, and offered to defray the collegiate expences for two years. Unfortunately, the offer was not accepted. No wonder that Poor Laman regretted in after life the loss of this golden opportunity. The advantages of an University career to a young man in his position, with talents and application, but without interest, birth, and fortune, are incalculable. The pecuniary independence afforded by the scholarship and the fellowship is in itself no despicable prospect;

but the benefits which distinction, fairly won at those noble and unrivalled institutions, confers, are the greatest where least obvious: they tend usually to bind the vagueness of youthful ambition to the secure reliance on some professional career, in which they smooth the difficulties and abridge the novitiate. Even in literature a college education not only tends to refine the taste, but to propitiate the public. And in all the many walks of practical and public life, the honours gained at the University never fail to find well-wishers amongst powerful contemporaries, and to create generous interest in the fortunes of the aspirant.

But my poor friend was not destined to have one obstacle smoothed away from his weary path.\* With the natural refinement of his disposition, and the fatal cultivation of his intellectual susceptibilities, he was placed at once in a situation which it was impossible that he could fill with steadiness and zeal. Fresh from classical studies, and his emulation warmed by early praise and school-boy triumph, he was transferred to the drudgery of a desk in the office of Mr. Charles Pearson, a proctor in Doctors' Commons. The result was inevitable; his mind, by a natural re-action, betook itself to the pursuits most hostile to such a career. Before this, even from the age of thirteen, he had trifled with the Muses; he now conceived in good earnest the more perilous passion for the stage.

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\* The elder Blanchard is not to be blamed for voluntarily depriving his son of the advantages proffered by the liberal Trustees of St. Olave's; it appears from a communication by Mr. Keymer (brother-in-law to Laman Blanchard)—that the circumstances of the family at that time, were not such as to meet the necessary expences of a Student—even for the *last* year of his residence at the University.



Barry Cornwall's *Dramatic Scenes* were published about this time,—they exercised considerable influence over the taste and aspirations of young Blanchard—and many dramatic sketches of brilliant promise, bearing his initials, S. L. B., appeared in a periodical work existing at that period, called *The Drama*. In them, though the conception and general treatment are borrowed from Barry Cornwall, the style and rhythm are rather modelled on the peculiarities of Byron. Their promise is not the less for the imitation they betray. The very characteristic of genius is to be imitative—first of authors, then of nature. Books lead us to fancy feelings that are not yet genuine. Experience is necessary to record those which colour our own existence: and the style only becomes original in proportion as the sentiment it expresses is sincere. More touching, therefore, than these *Dramatic Sketches*, was a lyrical effusion on the death of Sidney Ireland, a young friend to whom he was warmly attached, and over whose memory, for years afterwards, he often shed tears. He named his eldest son after that early friend. At this period, Mr. Douglas Jerrold had written three volumes of Moral Philosophy, and Mr. Buckstone, the celebrated comedian, volunteered to copy the work for the juvenile moralist. On arriving at any passage that struck his fancy, Mr. Buckstone communicated his delight to his friend Blanchard, and the emulation thus excited tended more and more to sharpen the poet's distaste to all avocations incompatible with literature. Anxious, in the first instance, to escape from dependence on his father, (who was now urgent that he should leave the proctor's desk for the still more ungenial mechanism of

the paternal trade), he meditated the best of all preparatives to dramatic excellence; viz., a practical acquaintance with the stage itself: he resolved to become an actor. Few indeed are they in this country who have ever succeeded eminently in the literature of the stage, who have not either trod its boards, or lived habitually in its atmosphere. Blanchard obtained an interview with Mr. Henry Johnston, the actor, and recited, in his presence, passages from Glover's *Leonidas*. He read admirably—his elocution was faultless—his feeling exquisite; Mr. Johnston was delighted with his powers, but he had experience and wisdom to cool his professional enthusiasm, and he earnestly advised the aspirant not to think of the stage. He drew such a picture of the hazards of success—the obstacles to a position—the precariousness even of a subsistence, that the poor boy's heart sunk within him. He was about to resign himself to obscurity and trade, when he suddenly fell in with the manager of the Margate theatre—this gentleman proposed to enroll him in his own troop, and the proposal was eagerly accepted, in spite of the warnings of Mr. Henry Johnston. “A week,” says Mr. Buckstone, (to whom I am indebted for these particulars, and whose words I now quote,) “was sufficient to disgust him with the beggary and drudgery of the country player's life; and as there were no ‘Harlequins’ steaming it from Margate to London Bridge at that day, he performed his journey back on foot, having, on reaching Rochester, but his last shilling, the poet's veritable last shilling, in his pocket.

“At that time a circumstance occurred, which my poor friend's fate has naturally brought to my recollection. He

came to me late one evening, in a state of great excitement ; informed me that his father had turned him out of doors ; that he was utterly hopeless and wretched, and was resolved to destroy himself. I used my best endeavours to console him, to lead his thoughts to the future, and hope in what chance and perseverance might effect for him. Our discourse took a livelier turn ; and after making up a bed on a sofa in my own room, I retired to rest. I soon slept soundly, but was awakened by hearing a foot-step descending the stairs. I looked towards the sofa, and discovered he had left it ; I heard the street door close ; I instantly hurried on my clothes, and followed him ; I called to him, but received no answer ; I ran till I saw him in the distance also running ; I again called his name ; I implored him to stop, but he would not answer me. Still continuing his pace, I became alarmed, and doubled my speed. I came up with him near to Westminster Bridge ; he was hurrying to the steps leading to the river ; I seized him ; he threatened to strike me if I did not release him ; I called for the watch ; I entreated him to return ; he became more pacified, but still seemed anxious to escape from me. By entreaties ; by every means of persuasion I could think of ; by threats to call for help ; I succeeded in taking him back. The next day he was more composed, but I believe rarely resided with his father after that time. Necessity compelled him to do something for a livelihood, and in time he became a reader in the office of the Messrs. Bayliss, in Fleet-street. By that employ, joined to frequent contributions to the *Monthly Magazine*, at that time published by them, he obtained a tolerable competence.

“Blanchard and Jerrold had serious thoughts of

joining Lord Byron in Greece; they were to become warriors, and assist the poet in the liberation of the classic land. Many a nightly wandering found them discussing their project. In the midst of one of these discussions they were caught in a shower of rain, and sought shelter under a gateway. The rain continued; when their patience becoming exhausted, Blanchard, buttoning up his coat, exclaimed, 'Come on, Jerrold; what use shall we be to the Greeks if we stand up for a shower of rain?' So they walked home and were heroically wet through."

To this account by Mr. Buckstone, of the circumstances which impelled Blanchard to the vocation which was to last to his grave—literature as a livelihood—his brother-in-law, Mr. Keymer, adds, that at the time he was hesitating on the brink of his decision, he wrote for advice to Mr. Vigors, afterwards M.P. for Carlow (to whom he was nearly connected), enclosing a dramatic sketch as a specimen of his power. The answer was as follows:

*"Chelsea, Saturday, June 28th.*

"DEAR SIR,

"I have to apologise for not answering your letter sooner, but I have been so much occupied since I received it, as to have had little time until within this day or two, to take more than a mere cursory glance of the sketch which you were so obliging as to send me. I have now to thank you for the very great pleasure you have afforded me in the perusal of it, and to express my hopes that you will continue to cultivate an art in which, I do not hesitate to say, that the specimen before me



affords a very high promise of your gaining success and distinction. I well know the disadvantages under which you have laboured, your want of leisure, your few opportunities of informing or improving your mind to any suitable extent; and nothing, I am convinced, could have enabled you to break through so many restraints, and succeed so well, but a native spirit of poetry, which again I repeat my hopes, will not be neglected.

“At the present time there is every encouragement given to the art, both in the way of emolument and reputation. And could you find leisure to devote your mind to it, you would find it I think as profitable, and sure I am as pleasureable, a pursuit, as any in which you could engage. Were I to offer my advice, I should certainly recommend a young writer at the present day, to choose any other line of poetry than the dramatic. In writing for the stage, as it is now constituted, everything must be sacrificed to *effect*; the poet must look to the actor; he must consult the very accompaniments, the very decorations of the scene; he must accommodate himself not to nature but to his audience; and to all probability he will be forced to abandon the calm and chastened tenour of the higher poetry, in the attempt to produce something striking. But you are the best judge of what will suit your own genius and inclinations, and what will be most likely to obtain that patronage which it is necessary for you to look after. Should you however prefer adhering to the drama, I would have you turn your thoughts as much as possible from the style of the later tragedians, even of those who have been most successful, and devote as much of your time

as you can spare to the study of our earlier school.\* I need not of course mention Shakspeare. Besides him there are a host of his fellow and contemporary labourers—Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, and Massinger, with others who cannot be too often or too intensely consulted, and in whose elevated sentiments and nervous diction, you cannot fail to find infinite instruction and delight.

“I shall be happy to give you any assistance in my power, either by my advice or criticisms, if you should think them of any value: and be assured I shall feel very sincere pleasure in witnessing your success in life.

“I am, dear Sir, very truly yours,

“N. A. VIGORS.

“*Mr. Samuel L. Blanchard.*”

Little perhaps was required to encourage young Blanchard in the pursuit to which his heart was already devoted; but in later life he often referred to the letter of Mr. Vigors, as one that had more than influenced—had determined—his career and his fate.

So far then had he entered upon the destiny of mature manhood—reliance on his own resources—the

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\* I venture very respectfully to doubt the soundness of this plausible advice. It is, I cannot but believe, to the too great study and imitation of our elder dramatists, that writers who might otherwise have enriched the practical literature of the stage, owe those faults of loose plot, and affected because obsolete diction, which if pardoned by the critic, condemn them with the public. The dramatist who would ensure wide and permanent success, must study the passions and the humours at work in the world around him, not as described in the books on his shelf—must embody the characters formed by his own age, and give them the language spoken in his own day.

independent wrestle with the world—while yet a boy ! Actor — author — adventurer ; with strong hope and patient brain ; the free lance of modern times,—when the pen supplies the place of the sword, and the ready wit succeeds to the stout arm. And now, at the age of twenty, he added to his cares and responsibilities, by a marriage of love with Miss Ann Gates.

It does not appear upon what resources he lived for the next three years : no doubt chiefly on contributions to the press. But in 1826 he was appointed by Mr. Vigors to the post of assistant-secretary to the Zoological Society, which advantageously assisted the small income that sufficed to his simple wants\* and scholarly habits. He held this post only for three years, but those sufficed to establish him in his profession of a man of letters. He became sub-editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, then under the direction of Dr. Croly, and editor of the *Belle Assemblée*. His active mind and warmth of temperament soon engaged him in the politics of the day ; from merely literary avocations, he passed on to the daily strife and turmoil of the partisan press, and became associated in the editorship of the *True Sun*, the *Constitutional*, &c. He afterwards directed the *Court Journal* ; to *Ainsworth's Magazine* he was also, at the same time, an habitual contributor ; and during the latter years of his life he was employed on the *Examiner*, that journal which may be fairly called an honor to the English press—from the greatness of the intellect it has long commanded—from the acknowledged subtlety and depth of

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\* In the earlier part of his life he abstained wholly from animal food.

its literary criticisms—and from the exquisite reasoning and the terse wit with which it enlivens the hackneyed common-places of party warfare.

The amiability of his disposition, and the thorough respectability of his character, no less than his ready talents and his growing repute, obtained for Laman Blanchard not only the society but the affection of many of the most eminent writers of his time. He was of a nature to enjoy peculiarly the advantages of such an intercourse. For his taste was formed in no exclusive schools, and he could admire whatever was good, no matter the rules or the contempt of rules by which it was produced. He was as free from envy and jealousy as a man can be ; and few writers younger than himself will fail to remember the generous encouragement and the seasonable notice which his connection with the press enabled his kindly temper to bestow. Among his more intimate friendships with men of letters, may be named Serjeant Talfourd, Mr. Procter, Mr. Dickens, Mr. Fonblanque, Mr. Leigh Hunt, Mr. Forster (the distinguished critic and biographer), Mr. Ainsworth, Mr. Jerrold—whose talents, developing themselves more and more with every year, in their own natural bent towards wit at once prodigal and humane, leave us less to regret in the loss of his boyish work on *Moral Philosophy*,—Mr. Fox, the eloquent lecturer, Mr. James Stuart, Mr. Robert Bell, and others of the same refined and accomplished class. He had been on terms of intimacy with the brilliant and ill-fated L. E. L., and by a melancholy coincidence, to his hands was committed the task of narrating a life that closed as darkly as his own.



The man of letters then was living on his calling; his brain ever active—his time wholly occupied. But was he contented, and was it for this that his boyish ambition had been trained, that his imagination had been cultivated, and his mind been stored? Was he fulfilling the promise of his youth, or realising the dreams for which he had deserted the proctor's desk? Editing *Monthlies* and *Belle Assemblées*—at stern task-work on *True Suns* and *Constitutionals*—was he nearer to or further from the goal, the hopes of which had first incited him to the race? We may venture upon the answer. His mind was less contented with its lot than resigned to its necessities. In 1828, when he was but twenty-five years old, Laman Blanchard had published a small volume of poems, called *Lyric Offerings*. In the year 1832, the writer of this slight Memoir became personally acquainted with the poet, and received from him a copy of these effusions. I was then conducting the *New Monthly Magazine*, and I was so delighted with the promise of these poems, that I reviewed them in terms of praise, which maturer reflection does not induce me to qualify. The following extract from my criticism may perhaps be pardoned, for the sake of the gems that shine in a worthless setting :

“The principal poem in point of length is called ‘A Poet's Bride ;’ but it is the lowest in point of merit, being full of the affectations of a youthful taste, and strong in the two capital errors of any long poem in these days—obscurity and the absence of human interest. Yet everywhere breathe the freshness and odour of a true and luxuriant genius, and the very weeds are but a proof of the fertility of the soil. I shall, however, pass in silence over this and all the longer poems in the volume, and come at once to some

sonnets which I think are entitled to rank among the finest, the most expressive, and the most original in the language.

## TO-DAY.

‘ A liberal worldling, gay philosopher,  
 Art thou that lift’st thy young and yellow head  
 O’er the dim burial of the scarce-cold dead—  
 Building above thy brother’s sepulchre  
 A home of love, that sense might almost err,  
 Deeming thine end therein to woo and wed  
 The flower-haired Earth for ever. Yet the red  
 In yonder west may well such dreams deter !  
 Yes, thou, all-hailed To-Day ! whose out-stretched hand  
 Scatters loose riches on a bankrupt land,  
 Even thou art but a leaf from off the tree  
 Of yellowing Time : a grain of glistening sand  
 Dashed from the waters of that unsailed sea,  
 Where thou to-night shalt sink, and I as soon may be.’

“ The next sonnet is still more beautiful. There is a rich and mellow softness of thought glowing over it that is literally as—

‘ The syllables that breathe of the sweet south.’

## MORNING.

‘ Wake from your misty nests—instinctive wake,  
 Ye fine, and numberless, and sleeping things !  
 The Infant Saviour of all blossomings  
 From heaven’s blue womb hath passed ; and for the sake  
 Of Earth, and her green family, doth make  
 In air redemption and soft gloryings.  
 The world, as though inspired, erectly flings  
 Its shadowy coronals away, *to slake*  
 A *holy thirst for light* : and, one by one,  
 The enamoured hills—with many a startled dell,  
 Fountain and forest—blush before the Sun !  
 Voices and wings are up, and waters swell ;  
*And flowers, like clustered shepherds, have begun*  
*To ope their fragrant mouths, and heavenly tidings tell.’*

“ In another sonnet on Noon occur the following exquisite lines :—

---

‘ This is sweet,  
 To see the heavens all open, and *the hood*  
*Of crystal Noon flung back ! the earth meanwhile*

*Filling her veins with sunshine—vital blood  
Of all that now from her full breast doth smile  
(Casting no shadow) on that pleasant flood  
Of light, where every mote is some small minstrel's isle.'*

"The next sonnet is on

EVENING.

'Already hath the Day grown gray with age ;  
And in the west, like to a conqueror crowned,  
Is faint with too much glory. On the ground  
He flings his dazzling arms ; *and, as a sage,*  
*Prepares him for a cloud-hung hermitage,*  
*Where Meditation meets him at the door ;*  
And all around—on wall, and roof, and floor,  
Some pensive star unfolds its silver page  
Of truth, which God's own hand hath testified.  
Sweet Eve ! whom poets sing to as a bride,  
Queen of the quiet—Eden of Time's bright map—  
Thy look allures me from my hushed fire-side,  
And sharp leaves rustling at my casement tap,  
And beckon forth my mind to dream upon thy lap !'

"In a sonnet on Midnight there is one most solemn and even sublime verse :—

'The Pulse of time is stopt——

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*  
\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

*The Altar of all Life stands victimless.'*

"Again, among some very fine lines, in which, however, the mannerism of Shakspeare, if I may use the expression, has been too much imitated, is the following bold image :—

'All earth is but an hour-glass, and the sands  
That tremble through are men !' ——

\*                            \*                            \*                            \*

"The author of these poems is a gentleman chiefly known in periodical literature—a contemporary and rival of our own. Be it so. The public hath room for all !

"Our poet, it is true, however, requires advice if he meditate another volume of verse. Let him break up the staff he has

borrowed from the old poets, and walk alone. Does he remember a certain line in Sidney's 'Astrophel and Stella':—

'Look,' said my muse to me, 'look in thy *heart* and write.'

"Let him more diligently study simplicity, and more carefully shun the ambition to be quaint. Charles Lamb and Wordsworth are beautiful writers, but bad models. Let him not forget too that Periodical writing is the grave of much genius—it leads men to write more than they reflect. All great works require stern and silent meditation. We must brood deeply over what we would wish to last long. Therefore among his stores—let there be one more sacred than the rest—not to be wasted lightly, but to be constantly and secretly fed. There is a beautiful passage in Quincilian, an author not sufficiently studied. What he says of oratory is equally applicable to poetry:—'*Ars magna sicut flamma materiâ alitur, et motibus excitatur, et urendo clarescit. Crescit enim cum amplitudine rerum vis ingenii.*' The power of the genius is increased by the abundance of the fuel that supplies it."\*

My criticism drew from the author a letter, in which he laid bare much of his secret ambition. "I look forward (it said) to some day, which the nature of my inevitable pursuits must render distant, when I may realise the dreams I cherished when my little volume was written, and escape from the hurried compositions intended for the day, into what I may call my inner self, and there meditate something that may verify your belief in the *promise* of my early efforts."

From the date of our correspondence on this subject, I conceived a lively interest and a sincere friendship for Mr. Blanchard, which every year served to increase. It was impossible to know and not to love him. He was thoroughly honest, true, and genuine; ever ready to confer a kindness; and of a grateful disposition, which

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\* From the *New Monthly Magazine*, May 1, 1832. Article on "Retrospective Criticism."

exaggerated into obligation the most commonplace returns to his own affectionate feelings and ready friendship. And yet such are the distractions of our life of London, and so engrossing are the peculiar labours and pursuits of each of its more active denizens, that we met more seldom than I could have wished, and, with a few exceptions among men of letters, our common associates were not the same.

Some time after this, Mr. Blanchard was engaged in the editorship of the *Courier*, and his political articles were of considerable value to the party he espoused; although free from the acerbity and the personalities which the warfare of journalism rarely fails to engender.

A change of proprietorship and of politics in that newspaper occasioned Mr. Blanchard's retirement, and necessitated the loss of an income, for him considerable. His services to the Whigs, then in office, had been sufficient to justify a strong appeal in his behalf for some small appointment. The appeal, though urged with all zeal by one who had himself some claims on the government, was unsuccessful. The fact really is, that governments, at present, have little among their subordinate patronage, to bestow upon men whose abilities are not devoted to a profession. The man of letters is like a stray joint in a boy's puzzle; he fits into no place. Let the partisan but have taken orders—let him but have eaten a sufficient number of dinners at the inns of court—and livings, and chapels, and stalls, and assistant-barristerships, and commissionerships, and colonial appointments, can reward his services and prevent his starving. But for the author there is nothing but his pen, till that and life are worn



to the stump : and then, with good fortune, perhaps on his death-bed he receives a pension—and equals, it may be, for a few months, the income of a retired butler !

And so, on the sudden loss of the situation in which he had frittered away his higher and more delicate genius, in all the drudgery that a party exacts from its defender of the press, Laman Blanchard was thrown again upon the world, to shift as he might and subsist as he could. His practice in periodical writing was now considerable ; his versatility was extreme. He was marked by publishers and editors as a useful contributor, and so his livelihood was secure. From a variety of sources thus he contrived, by constant waste of intellect and strength, to eke out his income, and insinuate rather than force his place amongst his contemporary penmen. And uncomplainingly and with patient industry, he toiled on, seeming farther and farther off from the happy leisure, in which “the something to verify promise was to be completed.”

No time had he for profound reading, for lengthened works, for the mature development of the conceptions of a charming fancy. He had given hostages to Fortune. He had a wife and four children, and no income but that which he made from week to week. The grist must be ground, and the wheel revolve.

All the struggles, all the toils, all the weariness of brain, nerve, and head, which a man undergoes in this career, are imperceptible even to his friends—almost to himself ; he has no time to be ill, to be fatigued ; his spirit has no holiday ; it is all school-work. And thus generally, we find in such men that the break-up of constitution seems sudden and unlooked for. The

causes of disease and decay have been long laid ; but they are smothered beneath the lively appearances of constrained industry and forced excitement.

Laman Blanchard was now past forty. He had been twenty-two years at his vocation ; it was evident that a man of letters he must continue to the last. At this time, in February, 1844, his wife,—to whom he remained as tenderly attached as ever, was seized with an attack of paralysis (her illness terminating fatally) ; was constantly subject to fits ; and the mind was weakened with the body. A disease of this kind has something contagious for susceptible temperaments ; they grow excitable in the excitement they seek to soothe. Those who saw most of my poor friend began to perceive that a change was at work within him. Naturally of the most cheerful habits, especially with those who knew him best, his spirits now failed him, and were subject to deep depression. His friends, on calling suddenly at his house, have found him giving way to tears and vehement grief without apparent cause. In mixed society he would strive to rally—sometimes with success—sometimes utterly in vain. He has been obliged to quit the room, to give way to emotions which seemed to rise spontaneously, unexcited by what passed around him, except as it jarred, undetected by others, upon the irritable chords within. In short, the nerves, so long overtaken, were giving way. In the long and gallant struggle with circumstances, the work of toil told when the hour of grief came.

Still, to the public, he wore the mask—which authors wear unto the grave. Still were his writings as full of pleasant amenity, and quiet and ready grace. Still, for

the lovers of light literature, the bloom was as fresh as ever upon the fruits of his jaded fancy and grieving heart. Several of his friends—anxious, from what they heard or saw, that he should change the scene—pressed him to visit them in the country. Though far from aware of his actual state,—for, owing to absence from London, I had not seen him for many months,—I, amongst the rest, wrote to offer himself and his family the use of a house which belonged to me, within a few miles of town. If I subjoin his answer, it is not, I hope and trust, to parade any evidence of the kindly intentions which were not only shared, but much more actively and usefully evinced, by many others, but to show how Blanchard's grateful nature led him to overrate the friendship and affection he excited, and also how much of firm but modest independence of spirit accompanied his gentle qualities.

*“ Union Place, Monday.*

“MY DEAR SIR EDWARD,

“I have had so many causes to thank you that I ought to know how, but do not, for that reason among others. Circumstances render this new token of your sympathy and generous thought for me precious and sweet beyond expression, and likely to be so as long as I am able to remember kindness at all. My wife is imperceptibly gaining ground in point of bodily strength, and is not at least in danger; but the brain is weakened, and the nervous irritation so great that I am kept in constant fever and alarm, and disabled from meeting the pen-and-ink calls upon me, (which return weekly and monthly,) but with much mental distress. We dare not think of moving her either by railway or



carriage at present, as the least jar would be extremely perilous ; and I can only stay here patiently and take comfort in the grateful remembrance of your offer. As for your other hint,\*—if anything could make me perfectly ashamed to be influenced by false delicacies in respect to such kindness, it is the manner in which you offer aid ; and feeling how much of true kindness often consists in the manner of rendering it, I would not, impressed as I am, hesitate one instant if I saw a decided end to be answered. It would be in the spirit of ingratitude and selfishness, too, *not* to accept were it greatly desirable. This, however, is not the case ; though I will not deny that some of the excitement under which L\*\*\*\*\* saw me labouring was produced by a shameful money claim, of which I did not dream, starting up after five years, on behalf of an acquaintance—not a large amount, by any means, but it is the third I have had, and as exasperating as if it were greater. My follies of that kind at least are ended.

“There is your other letter—the views in which I have been thinking over in connexion with the previous suggestions. All, be assured, will assist me greatly ;† but a little delay as to the plan has been needful, and in my past state of mind, I have not been sorry to postpone a beginning. But I must ask to trouble you with a statement before I do begin. For that, and all, believe me constantly and deeply grateful to you.

“LAMAN BLANCHARD.”

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\* In allusion to a request that he would not let any temporary pecuniary difficulties add to his anxieties.

† Respecting a literary enterprise.

But he seems now to have been haunted with an uneasy, restless notion that his literary connexions required constant care, and would brook no absence. His chief occupation was on the newspaper of the *Examiner*; and though in reality all the work was smoothed for him, the phantom of unreal work haunted the working man. So long had he toiled, that the image of toil literally dogged him. He chalked out schemes, more numerous, and even more ambitious, than any in which he had before indulged. Amongst the rest he meditated a work upon the boyhood and youth of eminent men, on which he wrote to consult me, and for which I ransacked my memory to supply him with anecdotes and illustrations. He passed whole days—even weeks—without stirring abroad, writing and grieving, as it were, together. It was thus engaged—his pen in his hand—that on Saturday, Dec. 14th, his wife was seized with one of her habitual fits. He carried her to her room in his arms, and sat up with her that night; about ten o'clock on the following evening he left home, and called at the house of a near relative, but staid only a few moments, observing that the light and the fire in the room were too much for him. This was the first symptom of a peculiar malady which was, doubtless, connected with his whole state of health. From that time he could not bear to sit near a fire, or in a room more than partially lighted. On his way home, and within a short distance of his door, he was attacked by what appeared to him paralysis, but which his medical attendants traced to congestion of the brain. He was stricken nearly speechless, and one side of his body became insensible. With much

difficulty he succeeded in making a humane passenger aware of his state, and the man led him home. He thought himself on the threshold of death; but with a strong self-possession, connected with his literary habits, he set at once to work to destroy some papers which he did not wish preserved. Feeling impressed with the idea that he had but a few hours to live, he took a farewell of his children, and left to his eldest son his last instructions. He then said that he should die happily, and at peace with all; that he did not think he should leave behind him a single enemy. After this, he desired to be left alone, and, by the help of anodynes skilfully prescribed, fell into a deep sleep. During that sleep his wife died.

When he awoke the next morning, apparently recovered, and calm and collected, the mournful intelligence was gently broken to him. He bore it better than they expected, but his composure was perhaps exhaustion. To his brother-in-law, Mr. James Keymer, whose affectionate anxiety for him had been unremitting, he, perhaps unconsciously, revealed more of his heart than his tranquil demeanour showed. Alluding to his own seizure the night before, he said emphatically, "I have tasted the bitterness of death. I have known what it is to die." His friends were deceived by his composure into the hope that, now he was relieved from the painful suspense his wife's illness had occasioned, the worst was over, and that his cheerful temperament would soon return. "But from that time," observes his brother-in-law, "he altered greatly." Up to the date of Mrs. Blanchard's funeral his spirits fluctuated. There is something in the following letter, written to a most

intimate and long-trying friend, that is the more touching from its mixture of business with grief—from its half-yearning towards the wonted literary occupation, and the manly desire to struggle on, which glimmers through the evident prostration of nerve and spirit.

“MY DEAR ———

“My heart is very full. You will imagine, and do, all that is within me. I have been in some danger from four nights’ want of rest and spectacles of pain, and had two medical men sent for in the night; but it is past, being but excess of nervous affection which looked paralytic. God, to whom I have prayed fervently, gives me strength now, and after some needful arrangement I shall be able to attend to the Paper,\* and feel that I may be relieved by it. I shall have some help in doing it. On Saturday I shall be obliged to leave to you all, as the funeral could not be postponed. Until you hear further, think that I shall be able to go on. I pray so, and in my soul thank and bless you always.

“L. B.”

I must add to this another letter written by Blanchard to the same friend, about a fortnight before his death. It was called forth by hearing of that friend’s severe illness, and of a domestic calamity which had visited him; and shows how, amidst his own sufferings, he could sympathise with those of others. From many letters that are before me I select these, as the most affecting and beautiful illustrations I could offer of the state of my poor friend’s mind in the period immediately

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\* The *Examiner*.



before his death, and of that sensitive tender disposition which so firmly held its ground, while all else was tottering around it. The unsteady, almost illegible, character of the handwriting is in itself touching evidence of the condition of the writer.

*“Monday.*

“MY DEAR ———

“Of my own illness I can give you a better report, having had some sleep, which abates the palpitation. But for you, my dear friend, I was sorely distressed, and surprised too, hoping and believing that no further physical calamity was added to your mental misery. I pray for good news of this new torment; and trust me, that will help me at the same time to much comfort. It is all a dream to me that I cannot see and talk to you a little at this season, if but to tell you how I share your sorrow for the loss of a person to whom now I feel the force of those attachments which generally require long and constant intimacy to cement. But with your brother I can truly say I seem to have held such intimacy, and the reason is, that at the first I liked him. I saw (we are quick to find this out) that he liked me. So that, apart from your own trouble, I have thought a hundred times with tenderness and commiseration upon his fate, and shall cherish the recollection of him for his sake as for yours. This grieves me a little too much to proceed,—with what is indeed needless, for you know well my feelings, if any one does. After all, the sympathies that unite a few, and very few, friends together as we with others are united, sweeten life at its worst. And this, in the kindness of friends, I am feeling as I know you are at this moment. Strange

that nothing seems real to me but the *details of the Paper*, which, difficult as they are, relieve me; and I hardly know what I should do without the task. And now send me a better report, and believe me ever yours in all seasons,

“L. BLANCHARD.”

His eyesight was now much affected, and he was prevailed upon to call in Dr. Anthony Todd Thomson; that eminent physician, whose experience has made him deeply conversant with the ailments of literary men, saw at once the true prescription—Rest. He enjoined total abstinence from intellectual labour. But the physician perhaps had been summoned too late. For that very night the patient was haunted by a kind of vision or phantasma, which he described at once as gorgeous and grotesque—an Arabian Night scene—no doubt the spectre of a brain already fearfully disordered. He rallied for a few hours the following day, but at night his depression returned. Violent fits of hysteria came on. His brother-in-law sat up with him, and heard him say frequently, “I am a maimed wretch both in body and mind—pray for me.” He was haunted too all this while with the fear of some strange and terrible fit, and besought his kind attendant if it came on to leave him—“You could not bear,” he said, “to see it.”

Again he rallied with the morning, and became even gay and cheerful; still, as throughout all that week, he was disturbed by the recollection that he had taskwork which he was unable to perform. In vain all had been arranged for him; his aid dispensed with in the journal from which he drew his main support. He had grown



so accustomed to the weekly battle, that he seemed to fancy it could not be fought without him.

Towards four o'clock in the afternoon, Friday, hysterics came on with great vehemence ; he raved, foamed at the mouth. It required several persons to hold him down. On the visit of his usual medical attendant he recovered, but the reaction left him completely exhausted. Towards night he thought that he could sleep. He dismissed his family to bed, and bade them affectionately good night. A kind-hearted woman, who had attended Mrs. Blanchard on her last illness, now officiated as nurse to himself. He requested her to remain in the next room, within hearing of his knock on the wall, if he should want her. His youngest boy, since his illness, had slept constantly with him. The nurse had not retired five minutes before she heard his signal. On going to him, he said, " You had better not leave me ; I feel a strong desire to throw myself out of the window." The poor woman, who had rather consulted her heart than her experience in the office she had undertaken, lost her presence of mind in the alarm which these words occasioned ; she hurried out of the room, in order to call up the eldest son. She had scarcely reached the staircase, when she heard a shriek and a heavy fall. Hastening back she found her master on the floor bathed in blood. In the interval between her quitting the room and her return (scarce a minute) the unhappy sufferer, who had in vain sought a protection against his own delirious impulse, had sprung from his bed, wrested himself from the grasp of his child beside him . . . in the almost total darkness of the room, found his way, with the sleepwalker's

or maniac's instinct, to his razor, and was dead when the nurse raised him in her arms. This occurred about one o'clock on the Saturday morning, the 15th of February.

It so chanced that the day before, two friends of Mr. Blanchard, one of whom was Mr. Ainsworth, the distinguished Novelist, accidentally met. . . . Upon ——'s inquiry after Blanchard, whom he had not seen for many months, Mr. Ainsworth said that he feared he was in a condition of mind that required instant and skilful attention. It was arranged that Mr. Ainsworth and —— should meet the next day at the house of the latter, and thence go to Mr. Forster, who was confined to his rooms, in Lincoln's-inn-fields, by severe illness, to consult what could best be done for their common friend. . . . Each no doubt had formed in his own mind some affectionate scheme that should draw Blanchard for a time from the scene of his domestic affliction, and give him a total reprieve from his labours. Full of such projects, when they met the next day it was to learn that he was no more.

The consultation at Mr. Forster's rooms was mournfully changed in its object; it was now not the father, but the children—the orphans, who were to be cared for. It was some consolation to such as feared that pecuniary embarrassments, (concealed by his delicacy and honest pride from friends whose delight it would have been to remove them,) might have contributed to the insane excitement to which his death is to be ascribed,—to know that there was nothing in Laman Blanchard's circumstances to prey upon his spirits, and that his worldly prospects had never been more fair and pro-

mising. The mind, indeed, ground into unnatural sharpness by over-fatigue and over-grief, had not worn, but cut through, the scabbard.

Thus, at the early age of forty-one, broken in mind and body, perished this industrious, versatile, and distinguished Man of Letters. And if excuse be needful for dwelling so long upon details of a painful nature, it may be found in the deep interest which science takes in the pathology of such sufferers, and in the warnings they may suggest to the labourers of the brain, when the first ominous symptoms of over-toil come on, and while yet repose is not prescribed too late.

The immediate shock that Laman Blanchard's death occasioned amongst those who knew him was succeeded by a deep sympathy in the fate of his children, not governed by words alone. Nothing more honourable to literary men than the zeal with which his old companions and associates entered into the consideration of permanent benefit for those in whom his memory and name survived, has occurred in our day.

In a short time, by the contributions of a few friends—themselves, with one or two exceptions, far from rich—a sum was raised sufficient for the support of his children for three years, when it is hoped they may be enabled to imitate the noble independence of their father, though with a happier fate. And owing, indeed, to the active exertions of these friends, the three sons were placed in situations, which already initiate them into industrious habits and promise future subsistence; while the musical talents of the daughter have found an opening in the Royal Academy, and justify the warmest expectations of future professional eminence. . . . Mr.

Colburn evinced his esteem for the writer with whom he had been so long connected, not only by a munificent subscription, but by the generous surrender of the copyright of various papers which form a large portion of these volumes. Mr. Ainsworth also gave up, no less liberally the copyright of contributions to his magazine.\* Eminent artists, headed by one of Blanchard's oldest friends, and engravers worthy of them, have gratuitously embellished this best monument to their departed friend. The Literary Fund Society awarded from its exchequer double the amount of the largest sum it habitually conferred. In short, there was but a common emulation amongst all to whom Laman Blanchard had been known,—who should most testify to the inheritors of his name the affection his virtues had inspired. And in his beloved and spotless name, they have found indeed no ignoble heritage, gathering friends around them at the onset of life, and inspiring, not only compassion for their affliction, but steadfast interest in their future welfare.

In person, Laman Blanchard was small and slight, though sufficiently well knit. His dark features, of rather an oriental cast, were prepossessing in themselves, and made still more so by their expression of intelligence and urbanity.† His eyes and hair were beautiful. His manners were more than ordinarily attractive; quiet, but not reserved; and gentle, but never servile. His

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\* It would be unjust to omit mention of the zeal and care which Mr. Hurst, an intimate and most valued friend of Blanchard, has devoted to the arrangement and production of these volumes.

† The genius and affection of Mr. Maclise have most accurately preserved the likeness of his Friend in the Portrait engraved for the work: *a portrait drawn from memory.*



natural kindness was so great, so visible in the small details of life, that it imparted to him that high and delicate breeding\* which we are accustomed to consider the peculiar attribute of loftier birth, and more tender nurturing. For refined breeding is in fact but a quicker sympathy with the feelings of those around us. Of his character little more than has already been stated is necessary to add. When I asked a friend who saw him more frequently than myself what faults he possessed, as drawbacks to his apparent excellencies ; shadows that might enable me to show him, to use my own phrase, “as flesh and blood ;” the answer after a pause was, “Why, I know of no faults, unless it is that he was hardly even of flesh and blood.” What the French call *caractère*, in a word, he might be said to want:—formed into too many sensitive, delicate, and refining lineaments, to present the prominent and muscular outlines of human greatness and human imperfection : Yet he wanted neither

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\* One anecdote of the exquisite consideration for his friends, which distinguished this most amiable character, is thus recorded by Mr. Buckstone in a letter to Mr. Forster :

“6, Brompton Square, 30th April, 1845.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“As kindness of heart was one of Blanchard’s great qualities, I am induced to send you the following fact, illustrative of the excellence of his nature. R—— (whom you know) lost his wife ; he was a neighbour of Blanchard’s ; the latter had rarely spoken of R——’s loss to him, at any time. The anniversary of her death arrived ; R—— found an invitation for him at his house, to pass the evening with Blanchard. R—— accepted it, and on arriving at Blanchard’s, found him alone, in excellent spirits, a little supper prepared, and it was only late in the evening that R—— discovered, that Blanchard recollecting it to be that day twelvemonth on which Mrs. R—— died, sent for R—— to pass the evening with him. The kindly thought held all the kindness.

“Yours truly,

“JNO. BUCKSTONE.”

courage, nor spirit, nor dignity, only they showed less under the flexible and soft proportions of his nature. He was singularly truthful; whether in his opinions or his friendships; he could maintain what was unpopular in society, if he held it good, and defend with warmth the absent if honoured by his esteem.

The predisposition to suicide has been pronounced by eminent physicians to be more frequently a constitutional tendency—a physical disease—than a purely moral obliquity of judgment or the result of mental operations. It seems probable that such a tendency, wholly of the constitution—and to be regarded with awe and pity, rather than the censure which we should attach to a deliberate desertion of the obligations and ties of earth—was interwoven with the keen and oversusceptible temperament of Laman Blanchard. It appears from the extract from Mr. Buckstone's communication, inserted in this brief memoir, that his impulse in the first trials of early life, was towards that desperate act, from which the mere instinct of an intellect thoroughly sound would recoil, perhaps, scarce less strongly, than the reasoning fortitude of Christian patience. Amongst his unpublished poems is the following one, dated 10th December, 1824 (twenty years before his decease):

SONNET—ON READING “WERTER.”

How shall an earthly judge presume to call  
The impulse of another's action—guilt?  
• That blood hath waked it which by it is spilt:  
None, not the hoariest sage, may tell of all  
The strong heart struggles with, before it fall;  
And if o'er-master'd, who shall witness, how—



Or stamp disgrace upon a martyr'd brow !  
The judge himself should be a criminal.  
O, ye of monkish hearts, cold, passionless—  
Turn from these leaves, nor shed a single tear  
On all the burning sorrows they express !  
For me—*I find my mind's strange mirror here—  
The glass of my own secrets ;* and time's token  
Must dull my brain when memory finds it broken.

S. L. B.

10th December, 1824.

This touching and almost prophetic confession of thoughts more dark and morbid than those who knew him could suspect to lurk under his cheerful demeanour and lively spirits, betrays, perhaps, that latent disorder of the reason which circumstance and suffering heightened into frenzy. Yet may we fairly believe that under happier destinies, this merely physical infirmity would have lain dormant to the last ; or rather yielded to the influences of that serene and religious knowledge which happiness makes the experience of men so good as my departed friend.\*

As it was,—not till the reason gave way, was the fatal deed done. Labour, anxiety, grief, disease, the apprehension of blindness—he had borne all—sensitively, it is true, but bravely, and without manifesting one intention of the selfish man's cold escape from life and

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\* Only six months before his death, Blanchard, in a conversation with his medical attendant, expressed in the strongest terms his horror of the crime of suicide. "How dreadful," he said, emphatically, "it would be for the children !—pointed out as the children of a suicide ! For my own part, if nothing else would deter me from such an act, *that* would !" This shows how strongly his reason and his conscience were opposed to the deed—while, perhaps, it shows also, that the constitutional infirmity had haunted him with the *thought*.

its stern duties. Who shall say what passed through that fevered brain in the momentary interval between the affecting fear of himself—which his last words to the nurse bespoke—and the abrupt paroxysm of the gathering delirium? Not in the day of battle did the ship, battered by long strife, hoist sail and flee; the cord snapped from the anchor—and it went in darkness down.

It remains now to speak (and I will endeavour to do so not too partially) of the talents which Laman Blanchard displayed, and of the writings he has left behind.

His habits, as we have seen, necessarily forbade the cultivation of deep scholarship, and the careful development of serious thought. But his information upon all that interested the day was, for the same reason, various and extending over a wide surface. His observation was quick and lively. He looked abroad with an inquiring eye, and noticed the follies and humours of men with a light and pleasant gaiety, which wanted but the necessary bitterness (that was not in him) to take the dignity of satire. His style and his conceptions were not marked by the vigour which comes partly from concentration of intellect, and partly from heat of passion; but they evince, on the other hand, a purity of taste, and a propriety of feeling, which preserve him from the caricature and exaggeration that deface many compositions obtaining the praise of broad humour or intense purpose. His fancy did not soar high, but its play was sportive, and it sought its aliment with the graceful instincts of the poet. He certainly never fulfilled the great promise which his *Lyric Offerings* held forth. He never wrote up to the full mark of his

powers ; the fountain never rose to the level of its source. But in our day the professional man of letters is compelled to draw too frequently, and by too small disbursements upon his capital, to allow large and profitable investments of the stock of mind and idea, with which he commences his career. The number and variety of our periodicals have tended to results which benefit the pecuniary interests of the author, to the prejudice of his substantial fame. A writer like Otway could not now-a-days starve ; a writer like Goldsmith might live in May-fair and lounge in his carriage ; but it may be doubted whether the one would now-a-days have composed a *Venice Preserved*, or the other have given us a *Deserted Village* and a *Vicar of Wakefield*. There is a fatal facility in supplying the wants of the week by the rapid striking off a pleasant article, which interferes with the steady progress, even with the mature conception, of an elaborate work.

Born at an earlier day, Laman Blanchard would probably have known sharper trials of pecuniary circumstance ; and instead of the sufficient, though precarious income, which his reputation as a periodical writer afforded him, he might have often slept in the garret, and been fortunate if he had dined often in the cellar. But then he would have been compelled to put forth all that was in him of mind and genius ; to have written books, not papers ; and books not intended for the week or the month, but for permanent effect upon the public.

In such circumstances, I firmly believe that his powers would have sufficed to enrich our poetry and our

stage with no inconsiderable acquisitions. All that he wanted for the soil of his mind was time to wait the seasons, and to sow upon the more patient system. But too much activity and too little preparation were his natural doom. To borrow a homely illustration from the farm, he exhausted the land by a succession of white crops.

On the other hand, had he been born a German, and exhibited, at Jena or Bonn, the same abilities and zeal for knowledge which distinguished him in the school of Southwark, he would, doubtless, have early attained to some moderate competence, which would have allowed fair play and full leisure for a character of genius which, naturally rather elegant than strong, required every advantage of forethought and preparation.

But when all is said—when all the drawbacks upon what he actually was are made and allowed—enough remains to justify warm eulogy, and to warrant the rational hope that he will occupy an honourable place among the writers of his age. Putting aside his poetical pretensions, and regarding solely what he performed, not what he promised, he unquestionably stands high amongst a class of writers, in which for the last century we have not been rich—the Essayists whose themes are drawn from social subjects, sporting lightly between literature and manners. And this kind of composition is extremely difficult in itself, requiring intellectual combinations rarely found. The volumes prefaced by this slight Memoir deserve a place in every collection of *Belles Lettres*, and form most agreeable and characteristic illustrations of our manners and our age. They



possess what is seldom found in light reading, the charm that comes from bequeathing *pleasurable* impressions. They are suffused in the sweetness of the author's disposition; they shun all painful views of life, all acerbity in observation, all gall in their gentle sarcasm. Added to this, they contain not a thought, not a line, from which the most anxious parent would guard his child. They may be read with safety by the most simple, and yet they contain enough of truth and character to interest the most reflective. Such works more than many which aspire to a higher flight, and address themselves to Truth with a ruder and more vigorous courtship, are calculated to enjoy a tranquil popularity, and a favoured station amongst the Dead who survive in Books. In conclusion, it seems to me that, with but slight reserve and modification, we may apply to our departed friend his own pathetic and beautiful elegy upon another.\*

He taught the cheerfulness that still is ours,  
The sweetness that still lurks in human powers;—  
If heaven be full of stars, the earth has flowers!

His was the searching thought, the glowing mind;  
The gentle will to others' soon resign'd;  
But more than all, the feeling just and kind.

His pleasures were as melodies from reeds—  
Sweet books, deep music, and unselfish deeds,  
Finding immortal flowers in human weeds.

True to his kind, nor of himself afraid,  
He deem'd that love of God was best array'd  
In love of all the things that God has made.

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\* THE ELOQUENT PASTOR DEAD.

He deem'd man's life no feverish dream of care,  
But a high pathway into freer air,  
Lit up with golden hopes and duties fair.

He show'd how wisdom turns its hours to years,  
Feeding the heart on joys instead of fears,  
And worships God in smiles, and not in tears.

His thoughts were as a pyramid up-piled  
On whose far top an Angel stood and smiled—  
Yet, in his heart, was he a simple Child.





## A QUARREL WITH SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

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SPIRIT of Charles Lamb; of him who, among all the Mr. Lambs of his time, was ever the Right Honourable; we fear not to take thee familiarly by the button, and draw thee into this private nook of a parenthesis—for one minute—for one moment of thine eternity. No longer would we imprison thee, though thou art all gentleness, and would chat and jest with us by the hour. But thou hast scarcely

yet had a glimpse of the Elysian beauty of the new fields thy feet are evermore to traverse ; thou hast hardly yet broken ground with one of the antique philosophers. Thou hast only shaken hands with Shakspeare—*only* !—and heard his sweet voice bid thee welcome. Thou hast had no gossip of grateful love with the old poets, who enjoy a modern public of thy begetting. We will be as brief, therefore, as our love is lasting. Laughing and sorrowing over thy *Popular Fallacies* the other night, it struck us that there might be some remaining fruits upon the tree from which thy genius plucked the riper and more delicious ; —fruits, not of the richest, but haply wholesome, and within our reach. We have gathered a sample—we have essayed at a Fallacy or two. They are crumbs that fell from thy table. In offering them where thy feast was spread—even here, in the *New Monthly*,—is there aught of irreverence—of presumption? We hear thy “no,” and feel that thou patted us on the head. Enough. Dear Spirit, that head will be pillowed even as thine is, ere it forgets to reverence the purity of thy nature.

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THAT TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE.

THAT is the begotten conceit of a junction of two silly skulls—the laying together of a pair of foolish heads. A single sensible caput would never have conceived it. It strikes at the principle of self-dependence. It tends to make a man droop, and falter, and fancy himself lame, when he is “nimble as the wind” by nature. It takes him out of the way to borrow his neighbour’s worm-eaten crutch, when he needeth only his own good spirit as a prop. It induces him to divide his solitude with a companion, by way of doubling it. It is an odd

mode of diminishing one's own weakness, to ask a friend to lend us the equal force of his. A halo is rarely struck out by knocking one head against another; you may rub two blocks of wood together for a long time before you will get a flame by the friction. What, if two negatives make an affirmative (which is perhaps the parent-axiom of the elderly child we are dissecting), does it follow that two nobodies shall be somebody? Are we, therefore, to understand that there is more mental richness in a couple of ordinary Smiths, than there was in him who lavished upon us the *Wealth of Nations*? Take two Thomsons, and try them at a poem; we know of one who shall out-Thomson the pair.

We remember a schoolboy saying that "two mulls are as good as a spin," and this top-maxim may, for aught we can tell, have helped to give an erring bias to our after-notions, and to lead us to the conclusion that two heads are better than one. But even a schoolboy will not be brought to admit that 0 0 are superior to 1. He sees at once that this is rather a roundabout way of coming to a straight stroke. You will not make him believe that two tortoises can run faster than a stag, let them double their pace the best way they can. You will not persuade him that a brace of ducks, stuffed after the sagest fashion, may be of more value than the goose with golden eggs; nor shall you teach him, after you have once taught him his letters, that a pair of one-pound notes, marked "forged," will procure him more comforts than a solid shining sovereign. Why, the first story he laughs at when he has bought his first jest-book, is that of our almost antediluvian acquaintance, who thought to halve the distance between Barnet and London, by dividing the miles with his pedestrian partner (you will meet with the anecdote in the last

original farce). And yet, when he has grown up, we would have him believe that a double-head is not so thick as a single one; and that the object which is invisible to two blind eyes, may be plainly seen by four. To say this, is simply to assert, that a man is all the sincerer for being double-faced; that two bad voices in a duet are infinitely sweeter than a sweet one singing alone. When we hear a human being make such an allegation, we might call him an alligator, and be as true to him, as he is to truth.

Lucky it is for us all, that those who have most truly instructed, most deeply delighted us, looked scornfully on this doctrine, and complacently on themselves. Fortunate for thee—oh! best of worlds that we have yet seen—that Shakspeare did not fling down his pen in the middle of his mighty task, and go forth to take counsel of the commentator, touching the folly of Lear and the wisdom of the Fool!—most fortunate, that he never went about to catch the whisperings of that ancient and most impudent insinuator, yclept Advice Gratis! Happy too, that thy Milton was vain enough to think his own head as worthy of trust as the heads of two of his critics, and to fancy he could hear the far-off harmony of fame, even though he scrupled to “tag” his lines according to other people’s tunes.

If two heads be better than one, then four are better than two, and the monster ranks higher than man. Then had Hydra a hundred times more brain than Homer. Let no discreet heart think it. There is one predicament in which two skulls may be better than one—in a boat, going against tide. Two hats, we grant, may be better than one; yet is one enough at a time. It is so with the head. It should be sole and self-relying. We like to wear ours in single blessedness on our own shoulders, and not let it hanker after a place on



other people's. To seek strength and confidence so, is to flatter ourselves that we are in excellent health because we have the doctor always with us. Are two doctors better than one? No; the summoning of the second physician is the summoning of the bell-toller. Or two wives?—at a time? Ask at the Old Bailey. All the nonsense of the notion comes to this assumption, that every hat one meets is equally inhabited, and that a head is a head all the world over. The fallacy is exposed in every room we go into. Wherever two or three are gathered together, one, at least, has left his head at home in his night-cap, or hung it up in his hat as he entered.

Never, when we want a Greek version of Homer, attempt to foist two English translations upon us; neither, when we ask for a Pope, affect to palm off a double Dennis as something immensely superior. We care for quality, not for quantity. You can pour out the two glasses of water for yourself, we can sip one—of Burgundy.

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THAT A BURNT CHILD OFTEN DREADS THE FIRE.

It has just been ascertained beyond a doubt, by a German philosopher, that the world is now about one million eight hundred thousand years old. During this inconsiderable period of time, experience has been trying to make fools wise. She is a fool for her pains, and, like her pupils, will never learn wisdom. In vain does she assure us that her little Solons who have been once scorched are ever after judiciously reluctant to play with live coals; plain-faced fact bluntly contradicts her. Wisdom is not burnt into us so easily; our stubbornness is not brought down at a single fire. It is as

natural for your burnt child to go forward to the bars as it is for the sparks to fly upward. He will make his way thither again ere his maiden blister is yet healed. The little fire-worshipper can no more be held back by a fear of burning his remaining fingers than the moth can be warned from the candle after the tips of its wings have tasted of the flame. Let the finger-tips, in like manner, be once touched with exquisite torment, and the palm will itch for a hot cinder. Burn one hand to the bone, and its widowed mate will offer itself a voluntary sacrifice to the consuming element. Once a-blaze, always a-blaze. As with the tender juvenile, who sets light to his frock, so with the sweet senior, who sets his fortunes on fire. Even in his maturer time, in his state of cinderhood, he still craves to be further consumed—

“Even in his ashes live their wonted fires.”

There is no such thing as burning the frailty out of the flesh. We shrink from the first tingling of the flame, but instantly advance again to the scorching point. We insist on self-roasting, by slow degrees, and at regular intervals, to show our contempt for experience, and to develop our chief virtue, which is obstinacy. Man will take anything you like, except warning. Who ever heard of a half-drowned skater dreading the ice? The oftener it breaks under him, the thinner the sheet he loves to cut his epitaph upon. Would any creature who had endured amputation of the leg by a skilful tiger be prevailed upon to keep the other out of a jungle, if he had but a chance of hopping into it? Does the angler who has been racked with rheumatism during a long career of no sport, shiver at the idea of catching an ague at last? or would he who has three times dropped from the clouds in a parachute, having



broken only three limbs, hesitate at a fourth venture while yet he had about him a neck undislocated? Assuredly not. A burnt child is fond of the fire. The mariner who has been most frequently shipwrecked is fondest of water. The adventurer who has miraculously escaped the fangs of a dozen fevers in as many parts of the world, is the very man who resolves upon a visit to Sierra Leone; and he who has as often survived the all but deadly attacks of thirst and famine, is sure to inquire out his way to the great deserts at last. A burnt child is particularly fond of the fire. Forewarned, forearmed, is sheer nonsense. Who is so indefatigable a scribbler as your abundantly damned author? Which of our orators speak so long and so often as he whom nobody listens to? What actors are so constantly before the public as those whom the town will not go to see? Who so easy to deceive as the dupe who has been taken in all his days? The gamester is a legitimate child of that frail couple, Flesh and Blood; he loses a fourth of what he is worth at the first throw—esteems himself lucky if he loses less to-day than he did yesterday—goes on staking and forfeiting hour by hour—and parts with his last guinea by exactly the same turn of the dice which lost him his first. Experience leaves fools as foolish as ever. The burnt child burns to undergo a course of roasting. He is a candidate for a skeletonship in the museum of moral anatomies.

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THAT GOOD WINE NEEDS NO BUSH.

MERIT is sure to make its way in the world. Virtue cannot fail of its reward in the end. Genius, trample upon it as we will, still flourishes and grows greenly up, and bursts into blossom. Truth is great, and will

prevail. So we assure ourselves ; and even with the assurance, sit down satisfied that they require no help at our hands. We pay our homage to the power of these principles by assuming them to be omnipotent. We show how truly we sympathise with them by allowing them to help themselves. Certain that they must prosper and succeed, we take no trouble to watch their progress, but leave them to get on as they may. It would be an impertinence, we think, to dictate to exalted intelligence, and offer bodily aids to ethereal essences. We give ourselves no concern about the virtuous, knowing that a noble action is its own reward. Merit like his, says the world, must make itself known ; and this said, the world's lips are ever after sealed. It *must* make itself known ; why then make proclamation of its desert ? why hang out a "bush," when good wine, like a good familiar creature, is sure to win its way into friendly channels, and to flow into the hearts of men ?—a river gliding "at its own sweet will !"

Bad wine only (in our philosophy) requires a bush. Sour things need a sweet recommendation to give them a relish. They can find no favour else. They demand our patronage, seeing that they have no deserts to depend upon. They claim our sympathy by their worthlessness, our help by their destitution. They are poor cordials, and crave cordial protection. *These* are the monopolists of the "bushes"—of the signs and tokens of good cheer—the advertisements of unrivalled excellence — the accessories of renown. The thin potation, thus advertised and lauded, passes for a subtle fluid, a wine of the richest vintage ; the rinsings of the cask become the nectar of the Gods,

"With beaded bubbles winking at the brim."

Thus it is that "the devil gets all the good tunes," and dances to music that belongs to his betters.

Why not give good wine its bush also? why not at least deal justly by the pure and sparkling, when we deal so generously by the flat, the dull, and the insipid? why hold up the sour liquid in a glass, giving it all the benefit of its little brightness, and leave the richer and rosier to shine through a wooden vessel, if it can?

It is surely one of the strangest of our propensities to mark out those we love best for the worst usage; yet we do, all of us. We can take any freedom with a friend; we stand on no ceremony with a friend. This taking a friendly freedom often means taking somebody by the arm and dragging him into a desperate scrape, because we reverence him above all men. This standing on no ceremony frequently implies sitting below the salt at your friend's board, and being wholly overlooked in the flattering attentions lavished upon a guest whom your friend cares not ever to see again. These things daily happen "in the beaten way of friendship." Dine with a man who had selected you from the whole world as his own, who had eyes and chose you, who plays Hamlet to your Horatio; he sits you down to a family dinner, and gives you his second-best port—no hock—no champagne—no claret. Dine again, when he would not for the world you should be absent, as he is desirous of entertaining an illustrious obscure whom he despises; you occupy no seat of honour to be sure, on that occasion, but you are regaled with your friend's *best* port, and invited to deliver verdicts upon his champagne and claret. You are comparatively certain of being well-treated when the entertainment is not got up on your account—when you play a subordinate part in the friendly comedy; although, even then, if there happen to be a cold plate, or a shabby bunch of grapes, you are sure of getting it, because your friend can "take the liberty"

with you; he knows "you don't mind it." We feel bound to be punctual and conscientious with those we are indifferent about; while we can afford at any time, on the frostiest night, to be an hour after our appointment with the single gentleman who occupies an apartment in our heart's core. With him we can play any prank that pleases our humour or suits our convenience. We can fail to visit him when he expects us, if we have to make a call upon an acquaintance; we can leave his letter unanswered for a week, if we have notes about nothings to reply to from unrespected correspondents. The pledge one gives him is as an after-dinner promise to one's wife to be home by eleven, which is rigidly observed if nothing happens to tempt one to break faith. It may be kept, or it may not be kept. We are to be punctual—if we like.

So, in our wisdom and fair justice we go on—

"Giving to dust that is a little gilt,  
More laud than gold e'er dusted ;"

proclaiming the merits of the bad wine, and making it, by every token, as enticing as we can; and blessing our stars that the good will be found out by its flavour "without our stir." As it is inestimable, we seek not to win esteem for it; as it is beyond all praise, we bestow no praises upon it.

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THAT OLD BIRDS ARE NOT TO BE CAUGHT WITH CHAFF.

THE older the bird, the more he flatters himself that he is worth catching. He is easily caught, were it worth while; but you have caught nothing, perhaps, when you have got him. Chaff is too valuable, too precious, to be expended wastefully; and because you are not so silly as to throw powder away, he conceives himself to be shot-proof. As nobody tries to catch



him, he fondly persuades himself that his own exceeding cunning secures him from capture. "Take me if you can," chirps he; and goes dodging about the woods, as though a flock of golden vultures were pursuing him. He is quite safe. He has not the felicity of being in peril. The young condor, pressed even by vulgar appetite, will not do him the honour of dining upon him. His toughness and antiquity are sure safeguards. He is only not captured, because there is nothing captivating about him. But if, by any chance, he hath a tail-feather fit for plucking, or a bone worthy the distinction of being picked, then is your old bird in imminent danger, for you may catch him when you like with half a pinch of chaff. The tender foxling, not arrived at the maturity of slyness, who never tasted chicken of his own stealing, shall take him without a ruffle of his plumage—only by pronouncing its dingy brown to be rich crimson.

What flocks of old birds flutter about in society, all sure that they never shall be caged, and all safe until a lure is laid for them! But the longer they live, the less chance have they of avoiding the trap. The older they grow, the slenderer the means of escape. The starched matron is fain to put faith in the compliment which, in her day of youth and grace, she knew to be nonsense. She is now only half-handsome, and can no longer afford to think her eyes less brilliant than she is told they are. She must make up, by exaggerating what is left, for the loss of what is gone. She is not now in a condition to call a fine remark rank flattery; she is obliged to believe, in self-defence. If her mirror will not admit of this, she has other resources; she has sage counsel, admirable judgment, perfect knowledge of the world. Admire these, and with a dignity which you call Siddonian, she confesses

that she is yours. You have only to convert the compliment to her beauty at twenty, into a tribute to her sagacity at fifty-five. Tell her she is not to be imposed upon, and you impose upon her effectually. Admire her penetration, and you will not find her impenetrable.

The old bird devoutly believes he is no goose. The grey-headed adventurer, who would not marry at twenty-six because the lady had only a little beauty and five thousand pounds, is taken in, thirty years afterwards, by a plain widow with a ready-made family instead of an estate. The moralist of threescore is ruined in three months by a *figurante*, and the man of refinement, fastidious up to seventy-two, "marries his cook."

Not caught with chaff! The old bird sniffs it afar off. Not a curate in the kingdom that does not once a week unite in holy wedlock threescore-and-ten to fourscore, or fourscore to onescoré. The ancient gentleman who has seen the world, who is profoundly experienced, and much too deep to be the dupe of an age so shallow as this, is to be won by an admiring glance at the brilliancy of his knee-buckle; praise his very pigtail, and you may lead him by it.

None are so easily taken in as the "knowing ones." The knowing one is generally an egregious ninny. The man who loses his last shilling at Doncaster, is no other than he who was sure of winning; who could prove by his betting-book that he *must* win by backing Chaff against the field. He is a fine specimen of the family of the Oldbirds. So is the careful, cautious wight, the original Master Surecard, the man of many savings, who in his old age falls in love with a loan; who dies in prison from the pressure of foreign bonds, or drowns himself in the new canal by way of securing what he calls his share. The genuine old bird is a pigeon.



## THAT WHAT EVERYBODY SAYS MUST BE TRUE.

THE first of living wits, in the world political, has admirably remarked that the Father of Lies himself is worthy of belief when he proclaims himself a liar. There is no questioning this profound truth ; and when our universal acquaintance, Everybody, shall acknowledge that he is not entitled to credit, we may, on the above principle, put full faith in his admission. As matters stand, Everybody's word is worth Nobody's taking. Social and political life is a Society for the Diffusion of Mendacity. When a story has gone the grand circuit, and travels back to us uncontradicted, we may reasonably begin to relax in our belief of it. If nobody questions it, it is manifestly a fiction ; if it passes current, it is almost sure to be a counterfeit. The course of truth never yet ran smooth. There is an instinct that leads a listener to be very sparing of credence when a *fact* is communicated ; it doesn't ring well in his ears—it has too much or too little gloss ; he receives it with a shrug, and passes it on with a huge notch in it to show how justly it is entitled to suspicion ; he is not to be imposed upon by a piece of truth. But give him a fable fresh from the mint of the Mendacity Society—an *on dit* of the first water—and he will not only make affidavit of its truth, but will call any man out who ventures to dispute its authenticity. A genuine taradiddle of the gross and palpable kind never fails for want of vouchers. Hundreds know it to be true—hundreds more were all but eye-witnesses of the fact related—some actually were ; all can attest it on their personal responsibility. Upon that point everybody has a reputation for veracity to stake—though the same stake had been forfeited fifty times ; and every-

body can contribute to the original story an unquestionable incident of his own coinage "to make assurance doubly sure." So it goes round, until the first projector hardly recognises his own lie; and ends by believing ten times more absurdity than he had palmed upon others. The real Pure, meanwhile, has the door slammed in his face; and to take his part, and assert the genuineness of his pretensions, is to be charged with cheating, and convicted of fraud. The only statement which it is safe to pick holes in, is that of whose accuracy you are sure; the only rumour which it is prudent to impeach of falsehood, is that which you know to be true. Tear up a fallacy by the roots, take away the foundation of a piece of scandal, and you are suspected of sinister motives, and exposed to the scurrility you had endeavoured to check: but only doubt an honourable fact that admits of demonstration, only convey an incredulous expression into the corner of your eye when you hear of an act of generosity which you yourself witnessed, and you are elected by universal suffrage a professor of morality. If you would have your story believed, give it an ill-natured turn, and make it as improbable as you can; if you can slyly insinuate an impossibility the better; it is then secure at least of being talked of, and will soon be credited, for Credulity lives next door to Gossip. Rumours confirm themselves when duly circulated. What everybody says, everybody will swear to. As success converts treason into legitimacy, so belief converts fiction into fact, and "nothing is but what is not." The scarcity of truth is atoned for by the abundance of affidavits; if a rumour be impugned, its veracity is easily strengthened by additional emphasis of affirmation, until at last "everybody says so," and then it is undeniable. When the error is universal, it is supposed

to end. The adoption of the foundling establishes its consanguinity. Everybody said that London would never be lit with gas; as everybody had once said that the sun lit the earth by revolving round it. Everybody is still circulating similar truths that cannot be contradicted. Everybody is seldom to be believed. "They say" is no proof that they know. *On dit* is French for a fib.

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THAT NOBODY KNOWS WHERE THE SHOE PINCHES SO WELL  
AS HE WHO WEARS IT.

TIGHT boots are the most perfect inventions that the genius of man ever devised as instruments of torture. It is in the nature of torture to distract the ideas and destroy cool judgment. Cool judgment is essential to the examination of the seat and source of pain. A man-trap is no enlightener of the understanding, though it is undoubtedly a quickener of the feeling. The looker-on in these cases sees most of the game—he observes all the nicety of the nip which the other only feels. It is enough for him who has a tight shoe to take it off; the maker of it, who best sees where it pinches, will provide the remedy. But this is not in human nature. People will comprehend their own complaints, provide their own remedies, and mistake their dropsies for asthmas. So self-sufficient is man, that he will always pretend to understand his own jaundice, and confound a gouty foot with an enlarged liver. *He*, and he only knows where the shoe pinches, because he is half crazy with pain; his brain is almost turned, and he fancies he can think with his foot. How many sagacious folks annually commit slow suicide, by reason of being so very sure that they know where the shoe pinches. They feel the disease, and therefore must

know the remedy. They are intimately acquainted with their own livers, and are certain that the evil is there. This ascertained, they proceed to kill themselves by gentle degrees, and pay the debt of nature by instalments: for every remedy they adopt tends to increase the real grievance, ossification of the heart. Of that they die, or rather assification of the head, just as they had effectually cured a malady they never had. Oh! yes, they know where the shoe pinches, being absolutely mad with anguish. As with individuals, so with masses. Every class of the social body knows where the shoe of England pinches her—only no two classes agree when you come to compare their convictions. Not one of them but can at any moment put a finger precisely on the point of pressure—but each has his favourite part of the body. The middle classes insist that the shoe pinches in the waist; the upper organs protest that it nips, almost to choking, in the throat; the industrious millions declare that the hands have the exclusive agony of the tight shoe; while some of all parties are of opinion that it is poor Britannia's corn that most requires release. All feel the pressure, and each judges the necessity of a remedy, not in the spirit that embraces an understanding of the whole system, but according to his individual sensations of inconvenience or pain. A tight shoe is much too large for common comprehension; the ordinary mind is not yet sufficiently expansive to apprehend all the delicacies of a pinch.

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THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THE PENCE, AND THE  
POUNDS WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.

THE proficient in the art of gathering littles together is universally assumed to be as skilful in the science of taking care of the much. The less is supposed to in-



clude the greater. The penny cleverly saved, involves the sovereign safely stored ; and he who is particularly anxious about a trifle obtains the credit of vigilance and caution in a weighty matter ; as the cunning rogue, who is scrupulously honest in returning the halfpenny overpaid, procures the reputation of being conscientious and just to the uttermost farthing. Trust him with a bank-note the next day, he will wrap up his conscience in it with perfect composure ; and the man who attaches most value to the halfpenny got, is the same person who will most readily part with the bank-note. *His* genius consists in taking care of the pence ; and the “ divinity that doth hedge a king ” he transfers to the sovereign. That will always take care of itself ; for as every particle of it has cost him an anxiety, he looks upon it as the imperishable monument of his caution and care.

The “ picker up of unconsidered trifles ” esteems himself the paragon of prudence. A collector of this class may be said to put his farthings into his purse and his pounds loose into his coat-pocket. The penny saved is a penny got ; and as he avoids Waterloo-bridge on account of the toll, he has his pocket picked in the course of a two miles’ walk round the Strand. He is too busy with his cunning to be cautious. His concern for trifles will not allow of due watchfulness in affairs of consequence. His hand is so accustomed to grasp the penny, that the smaller pound slips through his fingers. The most saving man of our acquaintance is by far the most expert at losing his money. A dinnerless friend could not extract sixpence from him ; but a stranger shall succeed in obtaining his draft on Drummonds’ for five hundred pounds, providing the security be bad, or at any rate exceedingly suspicious. Good security seems to be his aversion ; and the heavier the



sum the lighter his notions of risk. He is a very Argus over a penny, but a Cyclops (the one eye at least half-closed) over a golden heap. He is exactly the person to set his house on fire while searching for a save-all. Most people have encountered men of this description; they are to be seen as frequently as the maxim they admire is quoted. They part, "at one fell swoop," with the hoarded profits of a hundred meannesses. They will even do this consciously; they will be generous on a large scale, though miserly and extortionate in a little bargain. But even in their grander dealings, the ruling penny-passion will display itself. They will yield up the hard-earned thousand, deducting twopence for the postage of the letter that solicited it. Spirit of ——! I may not name thee, though thou art gone; but didst thou not once do even *this*?

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THERE'S NO SMOKE WITHOUT SOME FIRE.

LET a choice bit of scandal once make its way into circulation, and utterly in vain it is to tell people that it's "all smoke." Make it as clear as crystal, or St. James's in September, that the impure fact is pure fiction—that it never had the shadow of a foundation—that it was thin air from the beginning—do all this over and over again, but never hope to convince your hearers that there is not "something in it." There's no smoke without some fire, they cry. They will have it that there's a "spark" in the case, though the lady's honour is proved to be as driven snow. The favourite argument on these occasions is—how should all these things be said if some of them were not true? They don't for their parts believe all that the world says, they thank heaven that they are not censorious,

not at all of a suspicious turn, never in the least disposed to be rashly credulous relative to the frailties of their friends; yet still they must say they should be very sorry to think harm of anybody; but everybody must admit that there can be no smoke without some fire! They never believed, never supposed, never *even said*, that Lady A. and Col. Z. went to Dover together; on the contrary, they had the best grounds for asserting that the parties in question never got further than Canterbury: moreover, they never so much as hinted that her ladyship and the colonel started off at eleven at night, for they well knew the hour to be nine. In a like spirit they had refused to give any credence or any currency to the report that Sir Alexander had won *all* the young man's money, twenty-five thousand, under such suspicious circumstances; they—being perfectly aware that the sum was under, considerably under, seventeen thousand—had contradicted the assertion, for they detested exaggeration, and would never countenance scandal!

Scandal is never so sure to cling to a man's character as when it is proved to be scandal. A calumnious story has a chance of being discredited so long as it remains uncontradicted; but show it to be a calumny, gross, open, palpable, and people will draw suspicion of guilt from the demonstration of innocence. They resent the proof positive as an affront. They did not want to believe what they had heard, and why should they, willing or unwilling, be convinced to the contrary? Then comes the "doubtful head-shake," and the "Yes, yes, all very well; but there's something to come out yet; there's no smoke without some fire." Nevertheless, the "world" is often enveloped in smoke when there is no fire at all. It does not follow, because three crows are the heroes of the current tale, that it must

have had its origin in the existence of "one" of the black trio. When it has been established as a fact beyond denial, that a thousand cats were never visible at one time in the garden, is it a dead certainty that "ours and another" were there, and that thus the enormous falsehood has for its basis an atom of unimpeachable truth? It generally happens that there is neither crow nor cat in the case. But because this is a fact, and the only fact connected with the affair, it is religiously rejected. Human charity, in such matters, embraces not only the victim, but the fabricator of the falsehood; it admits that there has been exaggeration, and thus deals mercy to the accused; but it owns that there is "something in it," and thus spares the accuser. It is always a wise, cautious, and knowing charity, governed by the profound truth that there is "no smoke without some fire."

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PRaise THE BRIDGE THAT CARRIES YOU OVER.

WHEN the means to a desired end are honest and honourable, the popular practice is, perhaps, to look down upon them from the point of success with scorn, as the "base degrees by which we did ascend." Gratitude towards just and deserving agents in a triumphant work, is not an inseparable attendant upon the triumph—that everybody knows. But this reflection is somewhat less trite—that gratitude towards vile and worthless agents may very frequently be found among the characteristics of humanity. The hardest-hearted seem to have an instinct of tenderness—for villany. Where is the prostrate knave, whose cue it has been at some time to serve as the bridge for somebody just superior to himself to pass over, that cannot in this hour of detection command that somebody's good word? "All that you

allege to his prejudice," says grateful recollection, "may be very true—he may have been a desperate scoundrel in some things—but all I can say is, that he served *my* turn, and I have nothing therefore to bring against him—praise the bridge that carries you over, say I." "Yes, yes," suggests another acute memory, "the affair you speak of may have been a juggle, a fraud—to tell you the truth, I think it's only too likely—but still I am bound to admit that by a lucky accident it was the making of *me*. I had nothing to do with the roguery, if roguery it were, but it chanced to be a fortune in my way. I'm sure of *that* at least. Speak as you find, is my maxim. For my part, I always praise the bridge that carries me over." Thus, when the path across the bridge is very intricate, very dangerous, and very dirty, the bridge itself has an excellent chance of being gratefully extolled. The service it rendered is then faithfully borne in memory. It is the old story still. "If it were nothing but a rotten branch across a boiling torrent—merely a loose rope swinging in the wind, and a slippery plank suspended in the air—still I will say this of the old bridge, it served my purpose, and the least one can do is to praise what carries one over."

The influence of this feeling is seen in every class and condition of life. How many wink at the existence of bad laws, which for them have worked beneficially! The bridge has carried them over, and gratitude pays toll. Thousands may have perished by the means which saved them—the higher, therefore, and not the lower, is their note of praise. There are hundreds of honest people every day in the courts of law—lawyers, witnesses, and clients—who, profiting by some trick, and attaining a present object by some convenient quibble or legal flaw, the unworthiness of which they



are conscious of, bless the bandage over the eyes of justice, and praise the bridge that carries them over.

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SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST.

FOR some considerable period previous to the world's arrival at years of discretion, it was a question whether women had souls; but that men, by whom the question was modestly mooted, had minds—each male creature having a whole one to his own share—was never disputed for an instant. Yet this, like other indubitable truths, there is great reason to doubt. How many hundreds of particular friends could each of us give a list of, who have never thoroughly succeeded in “making up their minds;” who really “never know their own minds.” How should they, when they change them so often! They are not in the same mind two seconds together. They never keep a mind long enough to know it. Yet while in this very state, the whole tribe of human chameleons are fain to flatter themselves that they have “two minds” instead of none. When a man does n't know what to think, he observes, “I have two minds.” When most irresolute, we think ourselves capable of wonderful determination. How to decide is more than we can tell—what in the world to do, we know not—but we have “a very *great* mind.”

Second thoughts are often sneakers—treacherous untiers of true love-knots, roguish dishonourers of handsome acceptances. The first thought comes with a hand open as day, the second with a tight fist prepared rather for a blow than a boon. The first springs from a generous disinterested impulse, the second from a shrinking of the heart and a selfish betrayal of self. The first is a gallant gentleman, a little imprudent and headlong



sometimes; the second, a close curmudgeon who won't do good when it costs him nothing, lest it grow into a habit, and he be induced to sacrifice a sixpence at past eighty. Second thoughts turn the jovial resolution to make your visitor stop to dinner, into a hesitating hope that he will come and dine some day when the weather settles. They pare a banquet down to a sandwich, under the pretence of making it the feast of reason, and leave you to find the flow of soul in cold water. All that need be said for them is that they are best once in a way, but the exception proves the rule of inferiority. A man whose impulses are in favour of stinginess is seldom generous on second thoughts; but generosity often falls back upon meanness when it has had time to cogitate. Second thoughts are far less liable to say, boldly, "I'll make him a present of it," or, "I'll discharge the duties gratuitously," than to mutter inwardly, "Why should I?" or, "I may as well ask for another hundred a-year while I'm about it." The effort to be virtuous, in frequent instances, dies away before its purpose is completed; but meditated vice rarely rises, by the second-thought medium, into pure and exalted virtue.

Even when second thoughts come to a right purpose, they generally come in the wrong place. They thrust themselves forward to break off a match after a heart has been won, and a family thrown into convulsions; but they never made their appearance at the heels of the declaration of love, when it might more easily have been tripped up. Second thoughts have an awkward habit of being too late. They have a knack of sending the reprieve after the victim has been turned off. The good intention of going to drag a neighbour out of the flames when his house is on fire, is, if the result of second thoughts, pretty sure to find the object of its

tardy humanity reduced to a cinder. The good intention of plunging in to the rescue of a drowning wretch who has twice risen to the surface, is defeated by the selfish intruder, second thoughts, suggesting to the humane spectator of the accident, "Though you can swim well, you may be seized with cramp;" and second thoughts may be seen scampering off along the banks of the river, on a benevolent search for assistance half a mile off. Before this can be attained it has become useless, and then another thought arises—"Perhaps I had better know nothing at all about the affair thus accidentally witnessed, or I may get blamed for inhumanity which was but common prudence—rheumatism's no joke." This is another disadvantage attendant upon second thoughts—they lead to third; and these in turn to suggestions darker and darker—and so on to things without number, that are no thoughts at all, until the mind becomes a prey to indecision, and exhausts itself in the conviction that it cannot be stable unless it is shifting, and that the way to be right is to be continually abandoning one wrong position for another.

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#### PLAIN-DEALING IS A JEWEL.

CERTAINLY, plain-dealing is a jewel, but often confoundedly costly for that very reason. Plain-dealing is like the Pitt diamond, a gem of immense value, a precious and ever-sparkling treasure, yet a very awkward thing for a man to carry about with him and exhibit to all he happens to meet in his wanderings through the world. He who resolves upon carrying his plain-dealing into society, will perhaps find himself, sooner or later, unceremoniously brought to, with a "stand and deliver;" he must part with his jewel if he would be safe—if he

persist in keeping it he will be crushed. It will appear, at last, as a princely husband appeared to the plain-dealing spirit of Beatrice, "too costly for every day." The Eastern traveller in the story was obliged to part with the jewels brought from a land of enchantment, in exchange for as many of the petty coins, which, alone current in the country he had reached, would alone purchase him lodgings and provisions. In some places a doit might buy what a diamond might not; and plain-dealing, though a jewel of inestimable price, might be the wealth of a starving man, unable to convince others of its value, and driven from pillar to post as an impudent impostor, who refused to conform to the customs of the country—an incorrigible cheat who tried to trick people out of their own delightful self-love, by the insolent tender of a virtue worth nothing.

The jewel Plain-dealing is the more costly, by reason of its possessor's continual temptation to produce it, and hold it up to the light, that men may gaze on and admire its lustre. Directly he does this, he is either openly knocked down, by common consent, for an upstart, or cut by decent degrees as an utterer of exceedingly unpleasant truths. If the jewel-holder be in a dependent position, we need not go further than Granada, or look deeper than into the history of Gil Blas, to discover that he is easily reduced to pauperism, if rash enough to bring his riches into display. The Archbishop is representative of clergy and laity too in this matter. Whatever the composition may be, sermon or song, it is sure, if the latest, to be the best performance of its impartial author, and the humble plain-dealer who thinks otherwise is scouted for his conceit and his calumnies. But among equals is the jewel exhibited with greater impunity? The

invitation to display it is always given in the strongest terms:—"Now pray, my dear sir, give me your honest opinion of my house. Do you like the style? I'm not quite satisfied, I confess, and you must see something that may be altered. Now, this room, for example. But tell me your mind frankly. I've entire faith in your taste!" You venture, after a burst of rapturous applause, to suggest that perhaps the cabinet might have been shifted to the other side, or that the light is too glaring on the principal ornament, or that blue is a cooler colour than crimson; or you find that the grounds have not been made the most of, or that some people might have apprehended the situation to be damp; or, in short, that a perfect paradise is a rarity in this part of the world: and then, be sure, that although you pronounce the dining-room to be unexceptionable, from that hour you never set foot in it again, for your candid friend detests your envy, and despises your taste. You are lucky, if he forgets to abuse you for three months, as one who would not scruple to undermine the peace of a family, or pick any innocent man's character to pieces.

It is not at all more safe to comply with his hearty invitation to criticise his house or his horse, than it would be to volunteer an unfavourable judgment of his children, or to tell the mother of them that she has odious-looking hands, or a horrid cast in her eye. But there are plain-dealers, so called, who hesitate not to do this, and things like it: plain-dealing is not always the real jewel it professes to be. The diamond sometimes turns out to be paste; and the honest, downright fellow, who will speak his mind, offend or please, has often no better design than that of showing off his sham honesty at another's expense, and of gratifying a native rudeness and vulgarity of mind under the mask



of an inherent love of truth. He generally begins, before his opinion is asked or thought of, with "If you want me to speak my mind, I must say you never looked so ill in all your life." And then he pounces perhaps upon a little one who looks delicate;—"No, not him—the second one, what's his name?—he with the queer nose and sandy hair; well, if I'm to say what I think, he won't live—but they're all sickly." He is the man who thinks that a carraway-seed must have dropped into every bottle of your choice wine, and wonders why you persist in keeping your wife's portrait over the chimney-piece: though he adds, "I don't know, it might have been like her when she was young."

Now, nobody ever imagined the toad to be a whit more agreeable from the fiction of its having a precious jewel in its head; and a creature of the sort alluded to, though his plain-dealing, like poetry, were a true thing, would still be anything but fascinating. At the best he is a brute. He is the Apemanthus of real life, and Timon's flatterers would be preferable. If your hair but happen to curl, and keep its blackness, he thinks nature might have known better than to make a fop of anybody. He sneers at your very coat as monstrous, only because it has the grace to be anything but his cut. He waits to hear what metre the new poem is written in, and then, whatever it may be, condemns it for the metre's sake. Courtesies and compliments he never offers, lest it should be supposed that he had not spoken his mind. He makes it a rule to be disagreeable, to maintain the consistency of his character. The plain-dealer often requires to be dealt with just as plainly. There is something downright in a kick.

As it is very difficult to detect his motives at once,



and to discriminate between the false and the true jewel, the world must not be too severely condemned if, in its indignation at the insolence, it sometimes refuses to hear the honesty, and prefers the certain gratification of its dear self-love to the probable gratification of a snarling malignity. Even if honest always, this plain-dealing would, were it universally in action, be an abominable quality. It would be unwise to show it any very extensive countenance, or to insist too seriously upon its moral value, while the tastes of men remain as various as they are at present. Suppose you encounter but a score of thorough plain-dealers in a day, what is the consequence? You go to bed discomfited, disheartened, rebuked, self-condemned—to dream of perfection unattainable, and critics that find no fault. Every thing you had done, every thing you took pride in, had been pulled to pieces in turn. Each would have his “but,” and the “but” at last would apply to all you had done, and all you hoped to do. Ask opinions on your pictures; each plain-dealer would strike out his half-dozen as villanous copies, until all were flatly condemned, and you would begin to fear you had bought a collection of genuine Van Daubs. If all the acquaintances of any popular poet were plain-dealers, every line, in turn, of his greatest work, would be pronounced to his very face egregiously defective. Grant to each plain-dealing friend the license to speak out, and the best novel of the age, chapter by chapter, must be cut to ribands before the eyes of its author. Plain-dealing *is* a jewel, but it sadly lacks polishing: and, moreover, it is well to keep it a scarcity lest it lose its value.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH.

Not so : save in the estimation of those who would rather sit ingloriously at home, listening to the solitary chirper as he bewails the loss of his mate, than dash onward into the fields of glorious enterprise, content with the risk of returning empty-handed, so that they secure the chance of a double capture. He is no true sportsman who would not forego the one sure bird for the brace that he has a fair prospect of bringing down. The poor in spirit pocket their small winnings and decamp, while the bold player throws for the double stake. This bird-in-the-hand principle militates against all speculation—all adventure. It tends to induce people to stop short at the halfway house and be satisfied, lest they should encounter an obstacle further on in the road. To him who has studied the art of catching the two in the bush, the one in the hand is at best worth only half as much. He has but to take aim, and they are his ; he has but to lodge upon their tails some grains of salt, and they are bagged. Moreover there is this great addition to the advantage of acquiring a double treasure : the value of the “one in hand” is known—it is a tomtit perhaps—perhaps it is a barn-door relic of the last century, or a snipe in a consumption. Now the “two in the bush” may be birds of paradise. Who can say what they will not be ? They are yet to be caught ; and they may be Venus’s doves, or a pair of geese with golden eggs—or descendants from

“ The bird of Jove  
With thunder in his train.”

Great deeds had never been done, great fame never achieved, if the giant hand had been satisfied with the

one flutterer it held fast, and failed to stretch itself forth to seize the two, that, although they

“Dallied with the wind and scorn'd the sun,”

soared not so high but that the wings of hope could follow ; and when a lofty and daring hope leads, success is seldom far behind. If wisdom, and enterprise, and patriotism, had always preferred the one bird caught to the brace that invited the catcher, our teachers, the philosophers, had left off at the first lesson, and sitting down with the fame of a single volume, had shunned the risk of answering themselves and of writing their works into obscurity ; our merchants had kept their hard-earned wealth at home, instead of casting it out upon the waters to be returned to them again a twofold blessing, or just cent. per cent. ; and our statesmen and warriors had left the little isle much as they had found it, unconscious of its limitless capacity for triumph over land and sea. Careless about the two birds in the bush, content to be something and indifferent to captures, Napoleon had remained the little corporal all his days, and the Duke had cautiously sold out after his first battle, lest in the second he should lose his glory as the hero of *one* fight—his bird in the hand. Point out the blockhead who will not win when he may for fear of losing, and recognise in him the image of the noodle who cherishes his sprat through dread of not insnaring the couple of salmon that are already half-out of the river, and actually boiling to be caught. And this, of course, is the counterpart of the idiot, who, instead of sending out the one bird he can boast of, as a feathery seducer to bring back a troop of webfooted brethren following close at its tail-feathers, goes home and dines upon his decoy-duck roasted. No doubt he would have kept Sir Francis Drake at home after his

first voyage, as a *rara avis* too sacred to be allowed to go beating about foreign bushes any more ; and he would have the coolness to assure you that his own lottery-ticket, which had come up a blank, was worth as much as two tickets, each a lucky number, and not yet out of the wheel !

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## LIKE FATHER LIKE SON.

WE never found the young Grimaldi much like the old one ; nor was Cardinal Wolsey, as he grew up, remarkable for any striking likeness to his sire. Nor did Claude Lorraine resemble his, nor Nero his ; nor was Cleopatra in all things the image of her mother. The first son, Cain, was not a bit like the first father, Adam.

Nobody can know the old block by the chips. The cut of the family face comprises wonderful opposites, unlikenesses that seem the work of design. The nose paternal is seldom the nose filial. The handsome aquiline has frequently a snub for its eldest-born ; and the meek dove's eye becomes a goggle in the next generation. The tall, hardy, fine-limbed veteran looks upon his shrimp of a son, wondering whether he will be mistaken for a man when he is bald ; and the father, five feet high, looks up to his long boy, marvelling when he will come to an end. With mental gifts, the rule of contradiction still obtains. Philosophy begets foolery, and from fools issues wisdom. It is often the fate of genius to leave an illustrious name to a dolt ; as it is the fortune of a dolt, still more apparently hopeless, to see in his offspring the enlightener of nations, the enchanter of all ages. He who could never read a book in his life, stares to find his son writing one with



an eager and applauding public looking on ; while he who is justly reputed to have made half the world wiser, feels himself incapable of communicating a particle of his wisdom to the inheritor of his name. Other shades of difference are discernible where these fail. The son of the mathematician has an inveterate turn for poetry ; the author of fairy-tale and fable hails in his boy a young political economist ; and the offspring of the sublime expounder of divinity, goes upon the stage.

With respect to moral qualities, the want of resemblance is commonly as remarkable. The practiser of temperance upon principle, has a five-bottle youth for his son ; the miserly gentleman who has starved himself for fifty years, and deems the saving of three-farthings a virtue, bequeaths his hoardings to a lad who could not spend them fast enough if the day were eight-and-forty hours long ; the country gentleman's heir insists upon going to sea, the city merchant's becomes a fox-hunter, the clergyman's sets up a gambling-house, the justice's picks pockets, the physician's is a rope-dancer, and the honest man's " young hopeful " wilfully turns scrivener. Everybody's experience must furnish examples of these truths ; and biography is full of them. Could the life of Junius be written, it would turn out, beyond question, that his father was a blab, and could never keep his own counsel. The only facts in favour of the doctrine, " like father like son," that occur to us, are to be found in the peerage. There we see it clearly authenticated, that one nobleman, who was a duke, had a son, who was a duke also ; but else how different ! " The owl is a baker's daughter," cries Ophelia ; and truly, between the baker and Minerva's bird, we detect about the same degree of family likeness that is discernible half the world over.



NEVER MEDDLE WITH THAT WHICH CONCERNS YOU NOT.

THE cry of "A man overboard!" concerns everybody in the ship, for each one feels for himself that he may be the object of similar concern the next hour; and, therefore, every heart stirs at the incident, and takes part in the issue, joy or sorrow. But among the crew of life, there is not the same consciousness of equal liability to fall into danger and difficulty; and when a calamity is witnessed, the heart is by so much the less apt to feel the trouble as its own; it quiets itself with the reflection that such accidents are common and unavoidable, and that it is bad policy to meddle with other folks' affairs. There are always plenty of people to advise this non-intervention. "Why should you interfere? it is no affair of yours." "Why put yourself to so much trouble, when it cannot possibly concern you?" "I can't for my life see why you should be concerned about a matter you have no interest in!" Thus indifference and selfishness are inculcated, under the plea of delicacy, and of the non-interference proper to be observed in the affairs of a stranger.

Meddlers are often marplots—meddling, in some cases, is another word for mischief-making—granted. Quarrels would now and then end as suddenly as they break out, if no peace-lover interposed to mediate between the parties. "I was hurt under your arm," cries the dying Mercutio to his anxious friend, who had interfered to prevent the deadly issue. A man's affairs, however embarrassed, will frequently right themselves and prosper, if his neighbours will but let him alone and not insist upon adjusting them. What so likely to frighten a horse out of a quick pace into his full speed, as a sudden alarm and an injudicious effort to stop him

short? Grasp a good swimmer tight by one of his arms, with the view of dragging him in safety to the shore, and the chances are that two well-meaning people go down where no life was in danger. When slanderous tongues have been secretly busy with a character, it is sometimes difficult, perhaps impossible, to act in the character of advocate without doing as much mischief as the accuser; and it is exceedingly provoking, all must feel, to be knocked down with the shield which a clumsy-handed benevolence intends to throw over you.

All this admitted, the principle of meddling remains still uncondemned, and the censure is confined to that busy, curious, impudent, and injudicious interference which constitutes the social system of every little village in the land. People will meddle fast enough, where there is no chance of their doing any good, and a dead certainty that it will cost them nothing. But when meddling becomes a virtue, the old maxim starts to recollection, and leads to the discovery that the matter does not concern them. It is a convenient plea for the coward, who pulls up at the roadside to witness some interesting act of cruelty or oppression, and then drives on without a warning word or a smack of his whip, quite satisfied in his conscience that it is no affair of his. Or for the selfish son of the till, where his gains are ever increasing, who looks on, with his hands in his pockets, jingling the small change there, while some famishing wretch crawls by on the fruitless expedition to obtain relief; he thinks the parish officers might do something if the poor woman can contrive to live till she finds them out; and then, reflecting that he is not the overseer this year, and that the case does n't concern him, turns into his shop to give short weight to a customer. Such, too, is the sheltering plea of the many, who—while, we will not say a man's, but a maiden's

fame, and her peace, and her life, are being insidiously whispered away—coolly listen to the lie, leave it unanswered, and insinuate it into the ear of the next comer, with “This is what they do say, but what can you and I do in these delicate matters? Capital maxim that of our knowing old forefathers—‘Never meddle with what doesn’t concern you.’”

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EVERY ONE THINKS HIS OWN GEESE SWANS.

EVERY proverb-maker thinks his own fallacies truths; his own folly wisdom; very likely. But society, nevertheless, is thickly sown with self-depreciators—with people who cannot divest themselves of the uncomfortable belief that their swans are geese. We are acquainted with a gentleman who thinks his own wife the ugliest woman alive. There are scores (at least) of such modest husbands in every city. This ought to settle the question: the same lady, seen out of his own house, the lawful property of another, would not be destitute of all grace in his eyes. “’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,” by concealing the defects, or at least rendering them less conspicuous than they become on a nearer examination. The very face looks fairer, because we see it only in its best seasons, looking calm and smiling; the manner and the style of dress seem altogether different, for the private habit of slovenliness is unwitnessed; the temper appears thoroughly amiable, for the lady has not yet been caught in the sullens. How often is the cry heard in families, father and mother for once joining in sentiment, that they hear other people, to be sure, complaining of their children; but for their parts they must say they never *did* see such unruly and disobedient children as theirs. Yet these are the fond, the partial, the child-spoiling parents

who think their geese swans ! It would be more correct to say, that they think them goslings of an unpromising sort, and treat them accordingly long after they have grown out of the character. Shakspeare, ever keen in his discernment, says,

“ That which we have we prize not to the worth.”

It is far easier to do justice to others than to ourselves, and what belongs to us. If we exceed in our self-estimate on some points, we fall short of the fair valuation on many more ; and

“ Would some god the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us,”

numbers of people would cut a better figure in their own eyes than they now do, in spite of the universal reputation for vanity. Conceit, so called, is often nothing more than a resentful assumption, put on to soothe and conceal an unpleasant suspicion of self-deficiency. The fine lady, who when she sees another attracting attention, says, “ I can’t imagine what people find to admire in her,” has another saying, uttered to herself only, in faltering depreciation of her own taste, charms, and acquirements, when compared with the radiance that surrounds her. She may do her best to shine—she may “float double, swan and shadow,” and yet feel all the time, quite erroneously, that she is a goose.

Every monarch may boast his millions of modest subjects. Though but few may achieve greatness when they have the opportunity, many might have the opportunity if they were not so modest. They have no confidence in their goose, which they are supposed to have sublimed into a swan ; and if a swan it be, the bird dies without uttering a note of music. It has a “bad cold” even in its last moments, and can’t be prevailed upon to sing. The verdict should be, not accidental hoarseness, but unjustifiable modesty.



## FINE FEATHERS MAKE FINE BIRDS.

Nothing more universal than the faith reposed in this false proverb, and nothing more degrading and ruinous. Since sermons were first preached on themes associated with whited sepulchres, having foul odours and rottenness within—since moral lectures were first indited on those robes and furred gowns that hide lust and cruelty—since pictures of immortal Bobadils, with swashing air and sneaking heart, were first presented on the stage—the fallacy of the maxim has been glaringly apparent to every eye, while, as a practical rule of life, it remains as fully in force as ever. Those who have the wisdom to ridicule it as the guide of others, have the folly oftentimes, and continually in some affairs, to follow it themselves.

It is an absurd taste, or rather an irrational prejudice, that objects to fine feathers, except as aids to deception, and as substitutes for what they should adorn. It is good to laugh at that worst of vulgarities, which is always dreading to be thought vulgar; and fears to array itself in a graceful and becoming garb, lest its solid qualities should be mistaken for mere glitter. He is a shallow philosopher who is frightened at the thought of being taken for a coxcomb, and dresses meanly to denote the greatness of his mind. The foppery of the beau is to be preferred to the foppery of the sloven. All grand disdain of trifles is a symptom of littleness, and an affected contempt for fair ornament is the most pitiful of affectations.

The “goodly outside” is excellent, when not falsely assumed; but the worst natural face that nature’s journeymen ever left unfinished is better than the bravest mask that ever hid it. The sword-sheath of



exquisite workmanship—the gilt vellum and the rich leather in which the pages of poetry and philosophy are preserved—may be vanities, but they are never despised except by a vanity infinitely more preposterous. But because they are fair to see, and to be prized in themselves, shall we admit with our forefathers—as by implication we must if we take our text for the rule—that fine scabbards make finely-tempered blades, and that splendid binding makes a precious book !

Look at the crowds of gaudy over-dressed people in the world, who seem to have taken such pains to display, not to hide, the hypocrisy which is their rule of action—who want to pass for fine people, and begin by showing that they do, which at once defeats the whole project. There are the fine feathers truly, but what are the birds ! Look at the whole family of the Peacocks with tails spread ! Do their splendid dyes convince anybody that they have melodious voices, or, when all that gorgeous plumage is plucked off, would a famished pauper dine upon the tenderest of the train while stewed boot-tops were to be had ?

Look at the style of this author ; how smooth and glossy it is—how pleasingly mottled and how gaily crested ! it bristles up occasionally into a sort of bland fierceness, and carries the fine-feather principle as far as it will go. But has any critic out of the moon discovered him to be a fine writer because he affects the air of one ? His sentences are nicely balanced, his periods seductively rounded ; but what do they contain ? Does anybody suspect him of having been once troubled with a thought in his whole life ! Was he ever, even in a dream, the possessor of a solitary idea ! Look again at this actor ; he may boast from his birth the fine feathers in which a name associated with excellence always decorates its inheritor, but who is it that there-

fore sees in him a Richard or an Othello? Look at this specimen of a fine gentleman; in outward form and bearing, in dress and manner, he has every requisite, except the power, in whatsoever he may say or do—not of being true and generous—but of hiding from common observers his utter heartlessness, duplicity, avarice, and self-love. He has everything that belongs to the gentleman, except the spirit of one. A fine bird indeed his fine feathers make of him. Look again at this painter. Are his grotesque forms and brilliant colours tokens of high art—or of low artifice? Do not consider his plumage, but the mean, meagre, stupid, shapeless thing it clothes and covers. If birds were all feathers, he would be a fine animal.

In the same way, with the same result, the reference might be extended to every department of Pretension; in law, science, and divinity; in oratory, and in statesmanship! In all these, the pomp of the feathers often conceals for a time the poverty of the bird, only to be afterwards seen in ridiculous contrast with it. The successful quibble at the expense of truth, the false gallop at the expense of safety, the humble air masking ambition, and the “damned error” blessed with a saving text—the rush of words and the jumble of images intended for a sublime burst—and the expedient measure which makes nothing certain but the sacrifice of principle—are so many instances that people imagine they can wear fine feathers with admirable effect all through life, however they may laugh at others when similarly tricked out.

The finery intended to impose on the world retains its power of keeping the wearer wrapped up in absurd notions of self-importance, long after it has lost the effect of deceiving the looker-on. The mere glitter soon ceases to please; and the charm once gone, comes

the sound conviction, that the tone of the fiddle would be improved if the varnish were scraped off. To prefer the spoiled tone for the sake of the gloss, would be to prefer, for the sake of his fine feathers, the taste of a macaw with the toughness of half a century upon his bones, to the flavour of a partridge with nothing but his tender and delicate flesh to atone for his plainness.

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WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY.

THIS is the argument of the strong, in apparent encouragement of the weak, but often in real aggravation of their misfortunes. Those whose way lies clear and open before them, make it a point of conscience to decide that the onward movement is in others a mere matter of the will, and that all whose path is utterly blocked up, are obstinate people, and won't stir.

It is the argument of the stag to the tortoise when the bushes were on fire, "Why don't you run?"

Fleetness was easy to the creature sympathising, and he recommended fleetness to his slow friend. How vain would it have been to represent to the adviser the impossibility of running? His retort is, that to counsel people to run, who won't, because they never did, is hopeless labour,—that they don't know what they can do till they try; and that, for his part, he has invariably found that where there's a will there's a way. And off bounds the generous adviser down the first open road that presents itself to him, just to show practically how very easy it is to scamper away. But it is rather hard for the unlucky animal that has to stay and be burnt, to feel the additional mortification of being abandoned as a victim to his own obstinacy; as a creature so in love with laziness, that he would rather perish than help himself.

A man's thoughts are seldom more occupied about himself than when he is giving advice to his neighbour. He looks at his own means, determines what with those means he would do, and advises accordingly. Tell him he has mistaken his own resources and position for yours, and you only make him insist the more loudly that you may do the same thing if you like. Show him that the power is on your part utterly wanting, and you convince him of your deficiency of will. Prove to him that you can't, and he cries in a tone of despairing and indignant friendliness, "Ah! well, you won't." He has but one idea, one immovable conviction, that where there's a will there must be a way. There is no way to you, and you stand therefore self-convicted of refusing to proceed. Your friend meantime has an excellent excuse for withholding all interposition, and giving himself no further trouble. He sits down with an easy conscience. He has told you what to do, and you have merely answered that you cannot do it—in other words, that you don't choose.

Look at Smoothly; he represents a class. He is one of the lucky people. How should they possibly understand the doctrine of the non-existence of a way in spite of the existence of a will? Whatsoever they take in hand thrives, not in consequence of their cultivation of it, but in very defiance of their neglect. Wheresoever they turn, they are sure to find, without seeking it, a pleasant path open, and inviting them to enter. They never encountered an insurmountable obstacle in their lives; they do not know what the term means. They have rarely met with a temporary impediment, and then it was of such brief continuance, as rather to give a zest to exertion than to prove an inconvenience. Fortune, upon whose wheel their neighbours are broken hourly, smiles upon them always, peeping from under



her bandage slyly, in the excess of favouritism. No carelessness on their part can elude, no insensibility disgust her. If they shun her favours, she follows: if they shut the door, she flings her precious treasures to them in at the window. They take pains oftentimes to show that they neither deserve nor desire all this partiality, but they can no more lose their good luck than their personal identity. Their acorns come up oaks in a single night; they are not allowed time enough to be unfortunate. If by any chance you hear of a disaster happening to these lucky people, you laugh, not out of spite, but in pure consciousness that the seeming calamity is in reality a godsend. If their banker were to fail to-day, depend upon it they drew out every sixpence yesterday; or if by an apparent misfortune they had a heavy balance left in his hands, it is just a thousand to one that they contrive, by some inconceivable turn of luck, to get forty shillings in the pound. If they hear the bell tolling for a relation of theirs, it is most likely for some old eccentric cousin whom they never saw, but who has left them most unexpectedly a handsome estate, because he knew they did not want it, and because he had a taste for surprising people: and if at any future time a storm were to tear up by the roots an old tree upon that estate, they would be sure to discover a glorious treasure buried beneath it. Every ill-wind is sure to blow good to them. Smoothly is representative of a class, not very numerous, perhaps, but very well known. How should they who succeed in everything without an endeavour, believe success to be in any case unattainable, if endeavours be strenuously used! They have "somebody's luck and their own too," and they make no allowance for those who have none at all.

Look, on the other hand, at poor old Tryback; he is



one of a larger class, and altogether as unlucky. His whole life is one struggle against the stream, going back insensibly amidst desperate efforts to get on. He never knew what it was to tire, to shrink from a task because it seemed hopeless, to refuse to make a necessary experiment because he had tried it unsuccessfully before. And yet he never knew what it was to succeed. He makes every possible effort, and goes through every stage of failure before he ventures to call upon Hercules for help; and when his call is answered, the help is vain. Hercules himself, do what he may, cannot get him out of the scrape. Their labour is all labour-in-vain. The stone is rolled up-hill with incredible toil, only to roll down again further than ever from the top. Still the struggler despairs not, still he renews his work. His progress in life is but the practice of the soldier's marching-step, the legs moving as if in advance, but without stirring from the spot, unless it be to slip backward. He can never get on. He is foredoomed to fail. If you were to see him a hundred yards ahead in the race, and within an inch of winning, you might still bet ten to one on his losing it. Skill and exertion avail him nothing against his systematic ill-fortune. The horse he mounts knows his rider, and drops; the life-boat he jumps into upsets. Even with good cards the game goes against him; his knaves and queens regularly fall victims to kings and aces. The tide always turns just as he seems to have a chance of going with it. The scheme, successful on fifty occasions, fails at the fifty-first trial, the day he takes it in hand. His career is a series of forlorn hopes, from which his courage never flinched, but in which fortune never stood his friend. There is no ill-luck stirring but what lights on his shoulders; and from those shoulders his head would infallibly be taken by a cannon-ball, if but one

head were doomed to be carried off on a battle-field of ten thousand.

What lack of will is there here? It is the way that is wanting; yet the troubles of such ill-starred toilers as these are usually aggravated by the verdict pronounced upon their unsuccessful endeavours—endeavours condemned because they have been unsuccessful, and for that reason only. “Where there’s a will there’s a way.” All the effort to find out the way goes for nothing, merely on account of its fruitlessness. The world is too busy to take note of anything but success. It will not see the vain trials made, it only sees the object unaccomplished. It decides against the explorer, because he has failed to find a path that is undiscoverable. It comprehends the question of results, but not the question of means; and finds it more to its interest as well as to its convenience to decide, that people won’t *do*, than that things can’t be *done*. Men must rarely expect to get credit for endeavours, unless they succeed in them. Their ardour, their resolution, their toils, their watchings, their life-wasting, soul-wearying exertions—only serve to attract attention to their failure, if in failure they end. They command no sympathy, no reward for themselves. Nobody stops to admire the merits of the losing side, or to applaud the qualities that have been inadequate to the attainment of their object. It is enough that they proved inadequate—excellent as they were in their nature and admirable in their display—enough, if the cause in which they were exerted is unrewarded by fortune and uncrowned by a triumph. The virtue that is not victorious is unnoticed; the heroism of defeat is unmarked. Those who have done nothing, find it easy enough to sit in judgment upon others who have fallen short of doing all; those who have been prosperous without an effort, deem

it reasonable to condemn, as deficient or misdirected, the effort to which prosperity is wanting. It is with as much self-love as censure of others, that sentence is declared in the usual form—"where there's a will there's a way." The good-fortune that never cost a struggle, herein decides against the ill-luck that has been bravely wrestled against; and the weakness that has never known a trial, assumes a manifest superiority over the energy that has been tried in failure.

The powerful and the fortunate are very fond of the maxim, "where there's a will there's a way;" and they rarely use it without expressing in very clear terms a cold, insolent, and uncharitable judgment upon exertions they are themselves not called upon to make. They say, in short, to the weak and unprosperous—"You might succeed if you would, for effort is success, and we should find a certain and easy conquest where you have met but baffled hopes and continual defeat!" This is the language of lucky people to the ill-starred, of comfortable indolence to unrespected because profitless exertion.

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#### A STILL TONGUE MAKES A WISE HEAD.

THIS was doubtless the solitary aphorism of its author. He, we may be sworn, was emphatically a silent man. He kept a still tongue in his head, never wagging it but on the one occasion when he thus laid claim to wisdom on the score of his taciturnity. It was then wagged to some purpose, for the world has taken him at his word. His *verba pauca* have told better than other people's life-long orations.

Would a man pass for one who is possessed of the most agreeable powers of conversation, and the amplest stores of knowledge? Let him not open his mouth

but on some trivial subject, and then let him not utter more than six monosyllables at a time. Would he be looked upon as one whose opinion is valuable, and whose judgment is unerring? Let him keep a still tongue, and gaze with as little meaning as possible at the company to whom he has left the responsibility of carrying on the discourse. Would he achieve the honours due to wisdom? Let him abstain from proving himself a fool. Would he secure a character for eloquence? Let him sit mum and listen. Lest it should ever be said of him, "He has not a word to say for himself," let him be content to say not a word, and he will avoid the very suspicion it would seem reasonable he should thereby incur. How should he escape the vulgar sneer, "He hasn't a word to throw at a dog?" Not by being talkative, as seems most natural, but by being mute.

It is the simplest thing in the world. He gains possession of the good he seeks merely by not laying claim to it. His mouth is supposed to be full of pearls and diamonds only because he keeps it shut. His head obtains credit for being crammed with noble thoughts, only because he shakes it. The charm of eloquence, and the magic of wisdom, are conjectured to be the characteristics of his tongue when he speaks, for no other reason than that he happens to observe in due season, "Sir, I say nothing."

It is the opinion of many that the one great accomplishment which men who talk much in society, or make orations in public, most neglect and yet most need to acquire, is the art of knowing when to leave off. There is, perhaps, a greater, a more essential art than that—the art of knowing when to begin! Upon the principle we have been considering, that knowledge is easily gained. "Never!" would be the decision of any



one who sees the successful practice of the say-nothing principle—who observes how taciturnity is valued in company, and into what enviable estimation it raises its professors. If Dummy always wins, who would not wish to take Dummy?

It often happens that the agreeable trifler, or the expert wit, is less successful in fixing the interest of the company, and in reaping ulteriorly the honours, than the grave, calm, cautious listener, who has not uttered six words the whole evening, and those scarcely above his breath. The clever controversialist, and the amusing anecdote-purveyor, may have had it all their own way for a time, but before the party breaks up, inquiry is pretty sure to go forth concerning the silent man. The audience can comprehend the circulator of jests, but the wise man with the still tongue is above their comprehension. They have a clue to the characters of those who spoke to entertain them—they know one another well enough—but the silence of the one exception is a depth they cannot fathom. The unknown interests more than the known; and the fluent utterers of *facetiae*, and the garrulous descanters on philosophy, sink in comparison with the mysterious and unsearchable wisdom that sayeth nothing.

The truth, however, is, that the still tongue is often the sure sign of a stupid head. When speech is held to be the token and proof of man's superiority over all other animals, why should speechlessness be a token and proof of the superiority of man over man! Anybody, panting for martyrdom, and determined to be miserable, can, when he will, deny himself the glorious luxury of speech; any head can carry a still tongue in it; a calf's in a tavern window can do that. But to know what to say, and when to say it—nay, to utter commonplaces and make conundrums—requires more



judgment and ability than blank silence, adding to the semblance of deafness the reality of dumbness. The still tongue is generally the tenant of a head that has no other occupant. It is a ghost that haunts an empty house. It is the clapper of a cracked bell, and has a very good reason for not being in motion. The owner of it is, in nine cases out of ten, just wise enough to know that he is a blockhead, and would be by everybody set down for one if he were to open his mouth. That they impute wisdom to him because he does not speak, is no proof that he is wise, although speechless. The only reason why he says nothing by the hour together is, because by the hour together he has absolutely nothing to say. The silent-system is not with him a matter of choice, but of necessity. When he does speak, it is assuredly to the purpose, for he fully explains who he is. He is nearly related to the wise man whose prolonged and expressive silence so wondrously charmed Coleridge that Coleridge fancied he was dining with Ulysses, until Ulysses fell into raptures at the appearance of the apple-dumplings, crying, "Them's the jockeys for me!"

To pronounce upon the wisdom of the head, from the stillness of the tongue, is like deciding upon the excellence of the steed from the appearance of the padlock on the stable-door. The very thing offered as a test, is the thing that bars the judgment. The cork is, in some cases, and to a certain extent, a test of the quality of the wine, but then the cork must be drawn first. The eye judges of the stomach by the tongue; the ear can best judge of the head by the same organ; but inquiry is baffled in both instances if the mouth be for ever shut. Who can calculate a man's wealth merely from seeing his breeches-pocket buttoned up! We should never judge any one to be a graceful dancer

simply from perceiving that he was chained fast by the leg ; nor infer from his stopping both his ears that he had an ardent passion for music. We only suppose that the man who says little or nothing is, by virtue of his taciturnity, wise enough to speak to the purpose. It is like saying that walking on the banks of the Serpentine makes a good swimmer, or that a man is sure to ride well so long as he sits scorching his boots by the fire. That the still tongue makes the wise head we shall devoutly believe, when we have ascertained that it is the empty bottle that makes the drunkard.

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A GREAT FORTUNE IS A GREAT SLAVERY.

It may be an excellent thing to kindle in the poor a sense of the misery that waits on riches, but it must be hard work. The benevolent moralist might accomplish almost any other object sooner. The slavery of a fortune is what poverty can so ill understand ! All other kinds of slavery your freeborn Englishman comprehends, and shrinks from with the liveliest aversion ; but of the thralldom that comes with wealth, he has no instinctive abhorrence, for his prejudiced mind will, in spite of reason, associate with it ideas of liberty.

Yet look at the possessors of great fortunes ; look at the unfortunate slaves who live in Belgrave and Portman squares ; look at the cruelly oppressed inhabitants of Park-lane and Carlton-gardens ; look at the thousands of enthralled and helpless residents colonized north of Hyde park ; look at the countless dwellers in bondage who hug their chains in the many winding thoroughfares of the West-end ! What a world of slavery is there ! What a Siberia is St. James's ! It is a sight to fill the soul with melancholy, to make the

brain reel with horror, to melt the heart with pity. There they all are, compelled to live in fine houses, to drive fine equipages, to see fine company, and worse than all, to appear happy in the midst of their oppression,—content, absolutely content with the slavery which is their inevitable lot in this world.

They are condemned to keep crowds of servants, studs of horses, lands for other people to shoot over, wine for half Mayfair to drink. They are doomed to rise every morning with the weight of ten, twenty, thirty, fifty thousand pounds a year, and upwards, upon their feverish and anxious minds; and they know it will be the same next year, and the next, to the end of their lives. By unwearied and continual exertion they may reduce the heavy burden annually; and to lighten the slavery entailed upon them with their large fortunes, they may repair from time to time to Newmarket or Crockford's; but how slight is their success even if they do succeed! they but throw off a few thousands a year, exchanging their heavy fetters for a somewhat lighter pair. And then there is always the risk of winning, and of thus riveting their chains, and deepening the shadow of the bondage wherein they dwell. At best they can but lessen their enormous fortunes at the expense of one another, shifting a few of their responsibilities upon shoulders that had too many to bear already.

These unfortunate slaves in a free country obtain no consideration. People stare at a man as his carriage is whirled along Pall-mall, and turn their heads back to look, too often with a sensation of envy; they little think what it is to ride about with a coal-mine hanging about the heart! They gaze upward at the windows of a mansion in which light, and music, and festivity, seem to be making a paradise, and never stop to consider

that the enslaved owner has three or four parks—far off in the country—pressing with their many-acred expense upon his brain. They see him sauntering into his club, and never reflect that there may be a canal forty miles long running through his mind—or half a railroad harrowing up his whole soul. They know that he is deeply concerned in the stocks, and yet deem him free. Where is the country whose bonds are not about and around him? And yet men doubt whether his condition be that of slavery, poor man!

It is equally grievous to the moralist, to see the really free—those who have neither property, nor the expectation of property—insensible to the benefits they enjoy, the superiority of their condition when contrasted with the thralldom of great riches. So far from being lovers of liberty, of that kind of liberty which consists in the total absence of the cares of money, they care not how heavy their chains might be provided they be golden ones. It is not that they object to wearing fetters, but only to the metal from which they are ordinarily forged. There is no convincing them that the *millionnaire* must be a miserable man. Their blood fails to curdle, their hair refuses to stand on end, though you picture to them, with all the force of truth, the horrors of a mere twelve or fifteen thousand a year. Their strong nerves are unaffected, and their free souls are undismayed, by the appalling spectacle of three or four houses, and three or four carriages—a sumptuous table, and troops of gay followers—libraries and picture-galleries, yachts and hunters—with (when the whim seizes) the means of building schools and hospitals—the power of ranging over earth and sea, and finding a sure and thoroughly honest welcome everywhere! With a courage worthy of a better cause, the British heart longs for this thralldom. It is shocking to see what insensibility there is



among the moderns, to the magnificent maxim of our fortune-shunning ancestors. The charter of the land should run,

“ Britons ever will be slaves,”—

that is to say, if slavery consist in fortune, and its fetters be wrought of the precious metals.

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A GUILTY CONSCIENCE NEEDS NO ACCUSER.

THE greatest criminals are commonly those who suffer least from the stings of conscience.

Little sneaking rascals, indeed, who are always taking care of their consciences, experience twinges as often as they bring their consciences into scrapes. They need no accuser, because they are afraid of plunging into crime. They are always clinging to the skirts of villany, and letting go before they are quite carried off their legs, whither they know not where. They flirt with Vice, but venture not to take her in their arms and hug her as a bride. No, they have a conscience—that is, they are knowing enough to perceive that the cost of following up the vicious game will overbalance the profit of it.

If they at last screw up their courage for a piece of knavery, it is sure to be of the very silliest and most unproductive character; such as picking a friend's pocket of the purse he would willingly have lent them, or breaking open a poor-box when they might easily have guessed, from the cobweb suspended over it, that there was not a sixpence within. This done, their detection is inevitable; not because conscience flies in their face and proclaims their guilt in looks more expressive than words; but because they miserably bungled in the committal of the act itself, and rendered



it impossible to trace the deed to any creature in the district but themselves. They were, in fact, thinking of conscience all the time they were perpetrating the offence; they were for indulging in the greatest possible roguery consistent with the least possible injury to conscience; they were for trying how far they might go in scoundrelism, without being scoundrels in their own estimation; they wanted to step barefooted into the water without so much as wetting the soles of their feet. There was thus a divided attention; the act of rascality was ill performed, and detection followed, because they had been balancing between self-estimation and the good opinion of mankind, and striving to be as perfectly innocent in their own eyes, as they wished to appear in those of other people. Conscience played the part, not of the honest accuser, but rather of the bungling accomplice.

But among the greatest scoundrels, those whose glory consists in their having been a disgrace to their species, there are comparatively but few examples of the accusations of conscience. The villain of the first magnitude, or as he is more commonly designated the "monster in the human form," generally gets further and further beyond the range of the assaults of conscience as he plunges deeper and deeper into guilt. He is too busy in devising means to screen himself from the reproaches of others, to have leisure to heap any upon himself. His business is to escape punishment, not to inflict it. He does not stop to ask himself the question, what he is now, or may hereafter become, in his own esteem; but devotes all his care so to practise against the peace, the property, or the lives of his fellow-creatures, as not to forfeit more of their esteem than he deems superfluous to his security.

Once to begin tormenting himself with suspicions,

would be to invite the torture from other hands. He knows that to call himself a scoundrel, is to enable the bystanders to prove him one; to be self-accused is to be convicted by the world; to look like a villain is to be condemned; in short to have a conscience, is to be ruined beyond redemption. There is no fear that the blush of conscience will appear upon his cheek, while there is no bloodspot visible on his hand. He is true to himself in proportion as he is false to others; and, if he is ever to be charged with his crimes, needs some other accuser than his own consciousness of the guilt in which he has steeped himself to the very lips. In fact, the stronger his consciousness of that guilt, the stronger his motive, and the warier his measures, for guarding against detection.

The consummate villain, so far from suffering the attacks of conscience, and thus becoming his own accuser, understands nothing by the word but a convenience which his hypocrisy may resort to, when detection has come upon him by other means. A pretended conscience may serve him when the reality will not. When increased vigilance, or his own recklessness in the career of crime, has laid him open to conviction; when he happens to be caught in the fact, and stands condemned beyond all doubt or denial; a sham conscience often proves his friend. When nothing more is to be gained or hoped for in the character of the hardened villain, the affectation of remorse, an ostentatious penitence, a well-acted fit of horror at the picture of his own wickedness, have been known to render him timely and valuable service. He is now conscience-stricken! He has discovered that all mankind are sinners, and that he of all criminals is the vilest, the blackest, and the most undone. He has infinite compassion and lamentation for the world—he can hope

and he can pray for other people—but for himself he has no pity. Not one word has he to utter in his own behalf—not one touch of self-mercy does his conscience allow itself to indulge in. His lightest deeds look darker in his eyes than the worst abominations on record. His own boyish robberies in orchards—the theft of his poor white-haired grandfather's knee-buckle, with which he commenced his career—are offences more inexpiable than any murders committed by his fellow-sinners. Other crimes may admit of excuse, his admit of none; other wretches may obtain pardon, he dares not dream of it. He lays on the lash from morning to night, only stopping to pray that balm may be poured into the wounds of every wicked creature living, except himself.

All this produces its effect after a little time—it seldom fails. His self-accusations run into such excess, that the charges against him seem light, and his accusers, as they listen, feel pity taking place of horror. The reproaches of his conscience are so noisy, that they drown all other reproaches; and the world begins to meditate, not how he is to be punished, but how he is to be soothed, how consoled, how got off. Poor creature, they cry, his conscience is his rack! Why should further punishment fall on him? What are all other torments to those of a heart which remorse, the vulture, is gnawing night and day! And hearken, how mercifully he judges others, and how uncharitably, how unjustly he condemns himself!

“There is every excuse to be made for him,” ejaculates one.

“There is more of good than evil in his nature after all,” rejoins a second.

“If he did cut his master's throat, it was but a momentary aberration,” pleads a third.

"He spared his fellow-servant, when he could easily have murdered him, too," pityingly suggests a fourth.

"It was his excellent moral principles that held his hand," reasons a fifth.

"If a man of such sound religious feeling were to be cut off in his prime, it would be a loss to society," moralises a sixth.

"Without approving the offence, we really feel, we feel deeply for the unfortunate offender," whimpers half the world.

If the offender should be hanged in spite of the sympathy of his admirers, he goes out of the world a saint. The condemned cell is the deserted seat of every virtue, and the scaffold a stepping-stone to eternal happiness. People only wish, for their parts, that they had half so fine a chance of it as the good man with the rope round his neck. The rope itself is cut into pieces of three inches long, which are bought up as relics. The buttons of his jacket are treasured in the museums of the saintly; his aphorisms on conscience are transferred to school copy-books; and the tender-hearted petition the surgeons for one of his little fingers, to preserve it in spirits.

If he should escape that doom—on the ground of an insufficiency of motive for the perpetration of the deed which nevertheless he did perpetrate—or by virtue of his having become extremely penitent and conscience-stricken, not the instant he committed it, but the instant his guilt became manifest—then a new course of crime is freely opened to him in another quarter of the world, by the humane interest which follows him from this. He is sent from society here, not because he is unworthy to remain, but because he is much too good for it; and the first thing he hears on his arrival upon the new scene of life is, that he is sure to be better off



than he was. He is a felon, but he had no motive ; he is an atrocious criminal, but he has a conscience. Did he murder his master? hundreds are anxious to hire him as a servant. Did he set a house on fire? hundreds of householders are eager to obtain him for a lodger. It becomes a maxim that the reformed assassin makes the best protector—the principle of anti-combustion is recognised in the detected incendiary. All are ready to aid him—his guilty conscience that needs no accuser, has made him so interesting. Had he never committed the worst of crimes, he might have starved in his innocence and piety, for aught they would have cared ; but having repented, the moment he was convicted on the clearest evidence, he takes precedence in popular affection of every honest man in the place. His virtue would have been of no use to him but as a *dernier ressort*. The lesson taught to him and others is, that a conscience may be of great service ; but it must be a guilty one, or nobody will take the least notice of it. As his contrition is in proportion to his crime, so his interest with the devout and charitable is proportioned to his contrition. Hence the quantity of his guilt is the real measure of the false sympathy he excites.

The quality attributed by Iago to the Venetian dames, “whose best conscience is, not to leave undone, but keep unknown,” is the conscience of more respectable people than it would be pleasant, were it possible, to number. These are what Sydney Smith calls the undetected classes of society. Their conscience never upbraids them with anything it has allowed them to do. It is only another word for self-interest. If they decline engaging in any roguish adventure, it is because they do not see their way clear in it, or because they foresee a failure. Conscience to them is the police-



officer watching at the corner of the street, or the warning voice that reminds them of the steel-traps and spring-guns that lie in the way of the nefarious enterprise. Their conscience, in any such cases, will not permit them to become participators. Once convinced that their interest is not in the direction of the crooked path, they will walk conscientiously in the straight one; until a convenient cut to the right or left presents itself, and then, the advantage large and palpable, the risk little or nothing, conscience lures them down it: solemnly assuring them as they steal along, that the deviation is a sacred duty; a duty imposed upon them as husbands and fathers; a duty they owe to Mrs. Slyboots and the dear children. Conscience, with these respectable people, is the anguish of being found out, and the too late conviction that honesty is never a losing game in the end.

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JACK WILL NEVER MAKE A GENTLEMAN.

THIS proverb had its origin in illiberality and prejudice. There is still enough of these in the world to ensure it popularity, and recommend it to posterity, as antiquity recommended it to us. Until Jack becomes a gentleman, in spite of proverbial predictions, he must never expect to have his capacity for becoming one admitted. While he is down, the idea of his rising is deemed sheer insanity; while he is rising, his progress is voted to be too ridiculous; when he is up, and Jack is styled Squire John, he is by universal consent a gentleman; but the proverb remains in full force and effect nevertheless, and the notion that the fig, gentleman, may be gathered from the thistle, Jack, is scouted as before.

It is as vain to tell men they will never be this or that, as to tell the grub it will never be a gorgeous fly, and wanton in the idle summer air. But there must be a beginning, an opportunity. Jack must get a start. The mere desire, common to all the world, of bettering our condition, is not enough; there must be superior energy, or a fortunate chance, to conduct the adventurer into the right track. If the kind fairy come not, whether she be called genius, or good luck, or bear both names, as most commonly happens, the gourd will never be turned into a carriage of gold. And then there are so many who fall short by a mere hair's-breadth of the desired point—so many little feet that cannot quite get the glass slipper on! But, for all this, we may not repress effort, nor pronounce a verdict against the capacity to rise before it has had its chance. It is astonishing what rough and ugly pebbles polish up into sparklers, making the gazer cry out, "Did you ever! I shouldn't have guessed *that* to be a diamond." As of all the little dunces in an infant school, you could not pick out the dullest, and decide to a dead certainty that he would not turn out a genius in the money-market, or a dab at metaphysics; so you could not with greater safety predict that the little scrubby rascallion playing at leapfrog in a London gutter, will not hereafter be a fine gentleman, and figure at St. James's.

The world is full of genius, of some kind or other; its possessors want only that invaluable adjunct, the art of knowing how to use it. Search the simple annals of the poor; look around in the unlikeliest places, and judge by comparison, and circumstance; in every nook we light upon Gray's illustrious obscure.

"Some village Brummell, that with faultless tie  
The little dandies of the field o'ershoots;  
Some small inglorious Truefitt there may sigh,  
Some Hoby, dealing but in country boots."

Effort is damped by the chilling doctrine preached on all sides, that the low can never be other than they are—that the leopard cannot change his spots, and that Jack will be “no gentleman” to the end of his life. We admit that a pauper’s brat can be born with a vast and original mind, but we do not allow that a pauper’s brat can be born with a nature steeped in gentlemanliness. That is generally identified with a cultivation of the graces, with which it may coexist, but with which it has nothing essentially to do.

If we fail to encourage any sign of the gentleman that may be discernible in Jack, or to recognise in him a disposition to attain some superiority over his present state, he will be pretty sure to fall hopelessly into the ranks from which he essayed to start. If with some notions of refinement he is to be cut in the circles just beyond him, he will be still worse treated in the circles to which he belongs. There he must abandon his gentilities for the sake of comfort, as the Misses Primrose did when they visited the “two Miss Flamboroughs.” Jack may affect some neatness of dress and courtliness of speech, but among his familiars he will be told “It’s no go!” His gentlemanly taste, if a “true thing,” will stand but little chance of appreciation from his neighbours. Captain Marryat, to show how the low vulgar sometimes judge of the high, tells a story of a cabman who insisted that a lady by whom he had been abused in “shocking language” was indeed a lady. “Wasn’t she though? She was; a real lady—hat and feathers!” Partridge thought the man who played the *King* a far better actor than Garrick, who played *Hamlet*. Mock dignity succeeds where the real fails; and poor Jack, with the feelings of a gentleman, will be run down by the ignorant ruffianism around him, unless encouraged by the gentle to preserve them as the chief graces and blessings of life.

## BEGGARS MUST NOT BE CHOOSERS.

THE glorious privilege of being independent brings with it the glorious liberty of choice. It is an inestimable advantage, and yet one of the many that are rarely prized in possession, to the extent to which they are coveted beforehand. What can atone for the want of it, where it has been once enjoyed! To him who of two indulgences has always voluntarily chosen one, a sentence of perpetual restriction to that one which was his free choice, would be a sentence of deprivation of all enjoyment from it. The power of choice is everything, even when unexercised, and when habit has prejudiced the mind in favour of what was at first preferred from caprice or accident. The consciousness that the pleasure we have is that which we choose, and that another awaits us should the sense tire, is the great element of pleasure. There is in it the freedom from all restraint, and from all poverty of means, which is the soul of enjoyment.

But tell the comfortable old boy, the creature of custom, who for the last quarter of a century has spent his evening in tavern-parlour, that for the quarter of a century that remains to him he must frequent the same tavern-parlour still, and he will pray fervently for the indulgence, which he never yet tasted, of passing his evenings at his own fireside, "in the bosom of his family." He will pant after his neglected wife as the hart panteth for the water-brooks. Tell him he must sip brandy-and-water henceforth as he has sipped it heretofore, and he will pray for a cup of poison by way of change. He may be the slave of habit if left to himself, but seek to fix the habit upon him as a necessity, and he will loathe what he most liked. He rises from



a dull clod into a keen and sensitive spirit, and like the apparition conjured up by the weird sisters, he "will not be commanded."

Ascend a scale higher in life, and bid the regular and unerring opera-goer repeat for the rest of his life his nightly visitations to the scene which is his Elysium, and he will shrink from it as from the pit of Acheron. Thither (that is to the Opera) in all probability he would have perseveringly repaired, as often as the doors opened, and as long as two boxes held together, had his liberty continued; there, with his glass wedded to his lacklustre eye, his soul for ever flitting between rapturous excitement and a dreamy repose, realising neither, he might have been found years hence, in his extreme winter as in his early spring, displaying the ruling passion strong in death, but for the sudden check conveyed by the potent monosyllable "must." It was the death-knell of freedom of choice. His sweetest luxury is transformed into a hateful labour; not that he suddenly discovers dancing to be disagreeable, and Lablache a bore; but merely that the voluntary principle has been annulled, and remorseless compulsion set up in its place. Nothing that charmed him to go, could possibly charm him when he had no power to refuse. The delight he sought, would turn to a disgust if forced upon him. He likes singing, but not to the tune of

"The bird in yonder cage confined ;"

he likes dancing, but he cannot dance in fetters. He would rather pass whole evenings at sixpenny whist, with an asthmatic aunt who has nothing to leave him, than go to hear new Malibrans and see fresh Ceritos "upon compulsion."

"Always partridges," is a sentence which, so far from having any terrors to either of these creatures



of habit, would be passed upon them by their own lips. They preferred partridges from the first, and on partridges they would feast continually, unless told that they could never have anything else served up, when partridges would instantly become their favourite aversion, and thistles would be taken in preference.

Yet beggars must not be choosers; and, what is more, we must do all we can to remind them of the fact continually! The proverb means, that the miserable must put up with anything. It is enough for the hungry that we bountifully spare them a potato, without allowing them a veto as to roasting or boiling. They must take it on our terms, or they take it not at all; this is the only sense in which we can permit them to be choosers. They can have no choice as to the terms on which they are to live, but they have always liberty to starve:

“ ’Tis glorious thus to have our own free will.”

The world is all before them where to choose, yet have they no choice but this. They must take, not what they want, but what they can get; not what will do them good, but what others like to give. Their cry is, in their utmost need, for bread; and the good Samaritan proffers a blister for the relief of the chest.

Beggars must not be choosers! The feet of the wayworn wretch are cut and blistered; and if he casts a disappointed glance at the old rimless hat which Charity flings out to him, and wishes in his heart it were a pair of shoes, his ingratitude and presumption are shocking to the giver, and he is reminded, as the door of the benevolent closes against him, that beggars must not be choosers. He is considered to be in luck's way when he gets what is of no earthly use to him, in place of that which his wants most crave.

The doctrine which asserts that the hardship of this lot is very materially diminished by the want of choice to which the sufferers under it have always been subjected, applies especially to the flaying of eels. It says in so many words, that the blessing which people never had, they never want; and that the misery which they have always had, they relish exceedingly at last. The argument is, that the man who commenced life in a dungeon, and there ended it without the hope of change, passed his days as happily as the man who lived in a palace, with the choice of taking up his abode in a dungeon whenever it suited his fancy.

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THE FOREMOST DOG CATCHES THE HARE.

ANSWER, O ye of the Past! whose wisdom first proclaimed it, is this quite true in the Present?

There is a principle which, like the world whereof it smacks, is "too much with us;" it accounts the foremost dog a divinity, and the rest of the pack poor devils. We vote the first runner the prize before he wins it, and pronounce the second in the chase to be "nowhere." Now, foremost dogs—if the truth may be reverentially acknowledged in the teeth of a proverb—are very apt to miss their hares. That is a better proverb which defines the difference between Brag and Holdfast. Many a foremost dog, before now, has pursued the "go-ahead" principle, until nothing has been visible of him but his hind legs with his tail between them.

It is possible to go a little too far in following a darling object. Be it one of love, ambition, hatred, or revenge, the ardour of pursuit often carries us far beyond it. Have it we will; we devote every corporeal agent to the

chase; we start with a soul "all legs and wings," and the whole world is lagging behind us; when lo! just as the living prize is panting within reach—just as the glory, to secure which we have strained life itself to outstrip every competitor, is exclusively our own—all, all ours—whish-sh! we go by it: carried forward by the force of our own accumulated energies, the daring and impetuous impulses we have set in motion, without the slightest power of stopping until it is too late. Faster than a mail-train on a railway in fairy-land, have we shot past the precious prize, the creature of our too-eager and over-heated desires; pursued but to be overtaken, overtaken but to be outstripped. There is no situation more galling than this, or more ridiculous: at the same time, there is none more common.

Is it not absurd to a degree bordering on the sublime, to see the leader of the wild chase, at the very instant when the game should be in his clutch, shooting helplessly, hopelessly a-head of it—borne along, self-defeated, while his cooler competitor comes up at his leisure, and catches the hare? Still it is a very ordinary, every-day spectacle.

It is wise to give encouragement to the exertions by which success in competition is to be attained; but it is unwise, for it is unjust, to give all to the foremost because he is foremost, without waiting for the issue, or observing how followers run.

No failures or disasters attendant upon overshooting the mark will ever cure people of their fond reliance upon foremost dogs, to the prejudice of the zealous, emulous, and gallant pack, who are often in less danger of failing, and nearer to the mark by the exact distance they seem from it. The deceiver goes on, day by day, taking his unreluctant oath, and proving too much by half, yet deceiving still; while the plain-dealing disciple

of sincerity, with a simple affirmation on his lip, carries no weight because he has so little to say. It is soon settled that he is not to win, because he is modestly behind.

When the world's "foremost dog" plunges at full speed into a dubious canal-scheme, or enters, with straining nerves, upon a ruinous line of railroad, can it be said that he is in the act of catching his hare! We see him springing forward, the first in the throng, to join a bubble company, to dabble in foreign loans, to start an extra-opposition steamer, or to secure, with superhuman sagacity, some forged exchequer-bills on fortune-making terms; and the world halloos on its duller dogs, and cries, "See what it is to be foremost!"

Is there a lottery all prizes? he buys up half the tickets on the first day. Is there a project for paving the streets of the moon with wood? he negotiates for the earliest shares. Is there a plan for neutralizing earthquakes, and rendering avalanches beneficial on the principle of the sliding-scale? he is chosen chairman of the board of directors. Is there a steeple-chase, involving a leap from the Goodwin-sands to Tenterden-church? he is at the head of the mad mob. In short, is there a neck to be broken? it is his.

The foremost dog is the representative of the early bird, who is proverbially said to "pick up the worm." We have no sympathy with these early birds who are asleep before dinner, and only half awake at anytime. They always fancy that they have turned their day to good account if they have but seen it break. Their maxim is, not to make hay while the sun shines, but only to make sure of seeing him rise. They are up so soon, that they have always plenty of time and to spare—for doing nothing. They begin with the beginning, and think they have then done all. So entirely self-



satisfied are they in the reflection that they are early birds, that they look upon every other bird in the forest as a lost sheep. No peacock so vain-glorious as the early bird; he deems himself a shining character, like Phœbus, because he was up as soon. He is paradoxical, and argues that all who rise late, soon go down in the world.

"It is the early bird," he cries, "who picks up the worm." But he never waits to hear the memorable answer to this argument, "More fool the worm for being up so soon." By this it at once becomes manifest, that early rising, if good for one class is bad for another. So the foremost dog, oftentimes, instead of catching his hare is caught in a snare.

Again, is it not written in the book of the Sheridans, of Tom, the son of Richard Brinsley, when the purse of guineas was picked up in Piccadilly, at seven in the morning, that as the elder said, "See, Tom, in the finding of the purse the advantage of being up soon;" the younger rejoined, "True; but the man who lost it must have been up sooner." In like manner is the foremost dog a frequent loser by being foremost.

It is also recorded in the annals of Jemmy Wood the Rich, that when that early bird, arriving at his banking-house ere the shutters were fairly opened in the morning, happened to cash a bill before the clerks came, he boasted of being foremost—of having turned a profit of fifteen shillings while the clock was striking nine! "Ah!" returned the cautious old cashier, who had hung his hat up at exactly two minutes past, "Ah! sir, the race is not always given to the swift, nor the hare to the foremost dog; had you but paused, and spent a minute in examining the list of bills behind you, you would have seen that the one you have cashed was stopped!" The hares caught by some of our foremost



dogs have terribly sharp teeth, and bite harder than their captors.

We should pity the mistakes and reverses of these foremost dogs, and wish better luck to their undeniable zeal and activity, if they were a little more tolerant and charitable towards the fairer but less fortunate strugglers whom they temporarily outstrip. But we see them bent only upon "getting on," no matter at what or at whose expense. They seize on every accidental advantage, and freely place it to the account of their own astonishing merits; while they attribute all the disasters of a competitor to his ill deserts, and affect to look upon the obstacles which rise unceasingly in his way as direful and angry judgments. We see, amidst the stern reality of the contention, the hollowness of the powers to which success is promised—the showy qualities which seldom wear well—the dash, the trick, the cleverness that turns everything to account; and the spirit of enterprise that carries everything before it—until it fails! And then it remains for us to note, that the foremost dog, though he started so well, has not caught the hare at last; he has only succeeded, too often, in impeding better pursuers of the game, and preventing their hard, constant, long-sustained but unadmired efforts from being effectually cheered on to a more timely triumph and a worthier reward.

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#### BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER.

MUCH that is incontrovertibly true in the letter, is absolutely false in spirit. Read this ancestral *ipse dixit* according to the spirit, and we may ask, with little expectation of an answer, "In what wood? On what moor? Nay, on what duck-pond?" Birds, in the

sense thus figuratively conveyed, flock not together if they can help it. Though of feather identical, their paths are divergent, so long as they are unconstrained, and can enjoy delight with liberty.

But in a cage, or a sparrow-trap, the whole case is different. So with men. In the debtor's prison, and on the felon's wheel, birds of a feather may doubtless be said to flock. In barracks or on shipboard, in a union-workhouse or Westminster Hall in term-time, the same thing may happen; so in many other places; but still with considerable qualification, even here.

For in the debtor's prison, and on the felon's wheel, how can we say, unqualifiedly, that "birds of a feather" flock? All are criminals here—all debtors there; so far there are only two classes; but in each of these there are fifty classes. No two blades of grass, no two speeches from the throne, no two peas, no two French operas, are exactly alike; how much wider and more curious a difference might the nicely observing eye detect between any two debtors whom it might challenge for scrutiny! The shades of difference are more numerous than the grains of Time's stock of sand in these latter days. Greater still, perhaps, is the distinction between one felon and another; nicer, and more wonderful, and more infinite, the degrees of that consanguinity in guilt which enables us to class them unceremoniously as birds of a feather. Like the soldier in barracks, the pauper in the poor-house, they resemble each other on one single point—one only, and differ on ten thousand. Soldiers, merely by measuring upwards of five feet ten, may be voted all alike; paupers, simply by occupying the lowest place on the social scale, may be deemed one and the same; but there ends the likeness.

But if we enter the world, and observe the habits of

its classed multitudes who are more free to come and go—to part company and choose for themselves—we find that the rule of companionship among birds of a feather rarely holds good even in a qualified degree. To begin with the highest objects—the crowned heads. Where is the flocking together, save once in a century, at a congress! To sink down to a stage only one above the lowest,—who ever heard of executioners particularly affecting one another's company?

Take the case of an intervening class; more illustrious than kings, and more expert in decapitation than the headsman; the wits. Do they love to congregate and commune—to flock together and fraternize? Where is their aerial meeting-house, their star-roofed temple of exclusiveness? An omnibus on that road, to set us down within earshot, near the keyhole, would be worth the starting. But the truth is, they rarely meet at all, even in twos and threes. You find them thinly scattered to make up a show at the sumptuous tables of the rich; but never in full cluster round the temperate board of intellect and learning. There is good reason for this. When they meet together by chance, two, three, or seven, they cease to be wits. They are all dumb as Fear. They have encountered at once their keenest critics and most dangerous competitors. The presence of each one confounds the rest. The concentrated lustre of the audience so outshines the individual lustre of him who would address it, that selfish concern takes the place of sociality, and not a mouth is opened—but to eat. When the wits disperse, however, they find fit audiences, and are wits again. They talk now, because they feel that the rewarding laugh will not be checked either by the manufacture of a joke in return, or by envy at success. The birds migrate, each for himself and Apollo for all—and every

feathered flutterer of the flock becomes once more bold as

“the bird of Jove,  
With thunder in his train.”

A pleasant story was related the other day by a foreign correspondent of the *Morning Post*. The Pope's nuncio was introduced lately to a very distinguished circle of the wits; and having sat with thirsty ears, in a scene of the dreariest dulness, until dinner was nearly over, he addressed to his next neighbour, in a flattering and anxious whisper, this pertinent inquiry—“*When do you begin?*”

Physicians flock together, no doubt—at a consultation; just as lawyers are compelled to do for disputation's sake; but this argues nothing for their love of companionship. The several parties are as attached to each other, as the man of physic would be to the company of his deceased patient, or the man of law to the society of his penniless client.

Whatever kings may do, ministers must flock together; but then it may be asked—are they always birds of a feather? Or rather, do we not see, at least once in a century, met within the same treasury-nest, the cuckoo and the jackdaw, the kite and the dove—sometimes even the little tom-tit, perched on the folded wing of an eagle? Their compulsory flocking is no impeachment of the rule we are maintaining, which presupposes the operation of a “voluntary principle” of companionship.

Of the statesmen and legislators who are untrammelled by cabinet regulations, how few habitually flock together and associate! Take the birds of a feather. Do the most consistent and honourable men “row all together in the same boat?” No; for they are to be found on every side of the house, contending with each other on opposite benches. Do the turncoats? Not at all; they



are quite as variously situated, and never sit together. But what we call Whigs, migrate with Whigs? and Tories flock to Tories? No, not so. It often happens that a member of one party has no personal or family associates but in the ranks of his antagonists; that a red mixes in pleasant acquaintanceship with the blues, while a blue rarely encounters one of his own colour except in the public arena.

There is another and not less important class similarly characterised. Fancy, for one moment, an assemblage of editors—an editorial flocking together, to discuss the topics of the day, or the state of the nation! a commingling of pens in one grand literary plume! From the hour in which the first goose was plucked, the world has witnessed no example of such a unity in feathership. We have heard often enough of the mighty, the earth-changing influences, which must result from the cordial union of all literary men upon a given point; they would lift up the globe, star-high, if they were but to join hands—to flock together; but then there are two slight obstacles, for the given point is never settled, and the union never happens.

In mercantile circles, there is no greater propensity to flock. Buyers, happily, are not all congregated in one quarter of the world, and sellers in another. All the rope-makers do not pair off in one line, and hang together; all the tailors do not cut themselves out for exclusives; if we visit a hosier, we are not astonished at finding a silversmith in company; nor at a wine-merchant's table do we expect to hear each of the guests successively remarking, "I have some hock equal to this at seventy-two," and "You should taste my sherry at fifty-six." These sensible people well know that "two of a trade" are not the most agreeable company, and they shake their feathers for a flight in an opposite direction.



A habit of flocking together would be an unprofitable one to money-lenders, who in that case must draw lots, like shipwrecked mariners, to decide which should be the miserable martyr to the wants of the rest—which should undergo the fearful penalty of borrowing cash from his brethren for their relief in that trying extremity. But borrowers contracting such a habit would be still worse off; they could only lend one another their ears, and exchange blank acceptances not negotiable.

The flocking-practice, however, is generally thought to be a favourite one with thieves; but this is, in a great measure, a mistake. Thieves can scarcely be seen by anybody in gangs until they become convicts. True, we say they swarm; but that is because we find them in all parts of the town. If they did not disperse, and scatter themselves over a wide space, we should have them collecting into a dense multitude, preying upon themselves, and panting for the accustomed fingering of honest pockets. In this forlorn predicament, they could but ply their trade after the fashion of the two immortal professors of Fielding, where the Count packs the cards though aware that Mr. Wild has no money to pay his losses, while Mr. Wild is unable to keep his hands out of the Count's pockets though apprised by experience of their emptiness. Thieves can only be said to flock together on the presumption that the world is crammed so full of them, there is actually no room for them to separate.

Are beggars in a plight essentially dissimilar? Too much sympathy for each other, too much of each other's company, would ruin them. Thirsty travellers never seek about for dry wells; nor does the most eloquent of beggars address one word of his affecting appeal to Charity, if Charity have left her purse at home. Still

less would the practised petitioner for an alms supplicate the brother who begs. There is honour among thieves—and beggars.

Where then are the human birds who, of the same feather, flock together? We know not where to look for them, except in a genuine English party, highly genteel and respectable, while waiting for dinner, or early in the evening—a party of remarkably pleasant people, who have the misfortune to be chiefly strangers to each other. There, until a sufficient time to melt the ice (two hours) has elapsed, the flocking principle is frequently predominant—the ladies being all clustered on one side of the room, looking roses, but thinking thorns—and the gentlemen huddled together on the other, discussing the weather, the Derby, the corn-market, or the new ballet.

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#### SUGGESTION FOR THE CELEBRATION OF SHAKSPEARE'S BIRTH-DAY.

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AN event once happened in April, that has made it illustrious—more illustrious even than “the fairest maid on ground,” the ever fair and ever youthful May herself. The light of one little day has shed a glory upon the month, which is as pleasant and refreshing to the heart, as the breathings of spring that come with it are to the sense. SHAKSPEARE was born in April! on the twenty-third of the month, in the year 1564. This is quite enough to hallow the recollection of April, in the minds of all true lovers of poetry and human nature, as long as there shall be months, or mankind to enjoy them.

Let not the reader imagine that I am going to gild refined gold, and to eulogise Shakspeare. If I were an emperor, and were inclined to offer a reward for a new pleasure, I should probably offer one for a volume of praises worthy to be placed on the shrine of the greatest and gentlest-hearted poet that the world has ever seen. But, as it is, I should as soon think of writing an essay to prove that nature is a greater thing than art; that *Falstaff's* quips and quilllets have a tendency to excite laughter; and that *Hamlet* is a finer philosopher than the *Grave-digger*. My only object is to tell a short story, and then to throw out a suggestion by way of a moral to it.

I have the pleasure of being a member of a "club" that was instituted a few years ago, by a few personal friends, in honour of Shakspeare. The number of our members is limited to the number of his plays; and our regular meetings are two only, in the year: on the Anniversary of the Poet's Birth-day, and on a particular day in the autumn. As the club, if I must call it so, consists chiefly of persons connected with literature and the arts, we have provided a book called the *Mulberry Leaves*; and at each half-yearly meeting we elect a member or two to contribute something to its pages; an essay, or a song, or perhaps a fanciful vignette: all of course in praise if not in illustration of the "golden meanings" of the spirit in whose name we are assembled. Besides these contributions, which are reserved for publication at a future period, we have a few Shakspeare-songs, which the sentiment they express at least lends music to, and which the occasion never fails to make pleasant.

Now without pointing out, as a model for others, the plan upon which one little cluster of the admirers of

Shakspeare thus meet together, I may hope to be pardoned for suggesting to all who have drunk with similar delight and profit at the fountain of that verse, which philosophy repairs to for an inspiring knowledge, and which flows on from age to age in a current of the purest and truest humanity, that they cannot evince their gratitude to so social and loving a genius more acceptably, than by marking out the day of his birth as one of the brightest in their calendar: as a period when friends may well meet together, in unaffectedness of heart, to discuss all pleasant things in his name, to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of them—to put his poetry into practice for at least one night in the year, and to deserve the poet by appreciating his wisdom and gentleness. Let it not be supposed that such a celebration of his birth-day would degenerate into anything theatrical or common-place. We can talk of Shakspeare without eternally calling him “our immortal bard,” and the “sweet swan of Avon.” Let the reader try the experiment; let him assemble some half-dozen friends, if he object to a larger party, and revel for an evening upon recollections of *Bardolphs* and *Benedicks*. He will find that we have advised him well, and in “the sincerity of love and honest kindness.”

Of course there are many great names in English literature that might be made the annual instruments of calling friends together for a similar purpose; and we should like to see similar honours paid to them, even by public meetings. When a nation is blessed (or rather was) with a Pitt Club, we can see no especial objection to the establishment of a Hampden Club. A few lovers of poetry and lofty principle might possibly be called together once a year in Milton's name. There

are thousands, we hope, that would not hesitate to join as many Spenser and Fielding Clubs as might be formed. But Shakspeare was of all others a social genius, and stands first in more senses than one. Milton himself regarded him with "wonder and astonishment." Cowper thought it praise enough

"To fill the ambition of a private man,  
That Shakspeare's language was his mother-tongue."

And Wordsworth, an authority no less illustrious, exclaims in one of his sonnets,

"We must be free, or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakspeare spake."

The season of the year in which the birth-day falls, is itself an argument for its celebration—that season, to use his own words—

"When proud-pied *April*, dressed in all his trim,  
Has put a spirit of youth in everything."

a time whose sanctity and loveliness' have been beautifully touched upon in some verses that celebrate

"The hallow'd morn when Will was born, in the spring-time of the year.

"Some morn symbolic of his mind—elastic, warm, serene ;  
Whose smile expansive lighted up man's universal scene ;  
Whose subtle spirit everywhere could penetrate and cheer—  
On such a morn our Will was born, in the spring-time of the year."

*Shakspeare Songs*, by JOHN OGDEN.

After all these quotations it would be presumptuous to conclude with some verses of my own, were they not offered, as the writer of the songs from which I have just quoted, remarks,—in the hope that they may elicit better. I have had the gratification more than once of hearing them sung, adapted to an Irish air, by one of the ablest dramatists and truest Shaksperians of the age.



## SONG FOR SHAKSPEARE'S BIRTHDAY.

Ever since the dawn of time  
 Have poets told their sylvan stories,  
 Gemming life with truths sublime,  
 And crowning man with living glories.  
 Sweet their strains, but far less dear  
 Than his to whom all shapes were given—  
 Now a breathing violet here,  
 And now a streaming star in heaven.  
 Oh ! the vast, the varied mind,  
 The all-encircling line of Shakspeare !  
 Nature yet must feel regret  
 At losing him—the gentle Shakspeare !

Oh ! the brightest flame of life,  
 It burns in those who best adore him ;  
 Gloom and doubt, despair and strife,  
 Like snow melt all away before him.  
 All his mighty mind was love !  
 Yes, sure his pen was once a feather  
 In the wing of Noah's dove,  
 It links us so in peace together.  
 Oh ! the sweetness of his song,  
 The music and the mirth of Shakspeare !  
 Golden word was never heard  
 Like thy all-echoed name, my Shakspeare !

O'er the mind his magic breathed,  
 And still it leaves a charm within it :  
 As Apollo's harp bequeathed  
 Its music where it laid a minute.  
 Time shall never still the tone,  
 Nor e'er of radiant wreaths deprive him ;  
 Nature was his nurse alone,  
 And Nature only can survive him.  
 Oh ! the green, the glorious page,  
 The everlasting line of Shakspeare !  
 Millions meet, with praises sweet,  
 Around thy sunny shrine, my Shakspeare !

I repeat my prayer to the reader, to Shakspeareanize on the coming 23rd of April. Let him try the experiment—he will find it a pleasant and proper starting-

point for his summer enjoyments. "To conclude," in perfectly original phrase—if the suggestion I have thrown out should be the parent only of one meeting—if it should tempt only one lover of humanity to pay a hearty homage to its great Friend and Illustrator—my object will be attained.

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## ANONYMOUS.

*Ques.* What is your name ?

*Ans.* *N.* or *M.*

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IT has been advanced in a philosophic stanza, by one who knew how much of the vaunted elevation of man over his competitors of the air, earth, and waters, is comprised in the attribute of speech, that "words are things." And, considering their various and universal effects, it is at least as safe a proposition to support as the doctrine of another and more orthodox assenter, who would have us believe that Mont Blanc is merely a lump of imagination—a concentration of thoughts, or of the "stuff that dreams are made of"—a handful of nonentity ; and that Pompeii is nothing more nor less than an idea in ruins. Now whether Lord Byron or Bishop Berkeley may be said to have succeeded in loosening the Gordian knot of philosophy, or whether that object remains to be accomplished by time and Mr. Coleridge, it is a fact as certain as the progress of uncertainty itself, that the word, whose uses and perversions I am about to discuss, can never become part and parcel of any known or unknown system of physics or metaphysics. It is neither a thing—according to

the peer ; nor nothing—as assumed by the prelate : neither a term referable to the discoveries of art or science, nor a name bestowed by Adam on anything God has made : yet it is at once universal and individual in its application and properties. It represents nothing—or everything—in the material and immaterial world : while it unites in its signification the mockery and marvels, the shadows and solidity of both. It reveals to us the secret link between matter and mind, the inscrutable agency that impels the machinery of being. It possesses a substantive faculty, and requires not another word to be joined with it. The great arithmeticians of the earth would fail to estimate the infinite variety of causes and effects, of doubts and indecisions, of subtleties and evasions, that follow in the train of this one word *Anonymous*, and constitute it the Lord High Chancellor of our language. As little could they number or appreciate the manifold blessings it includes—the outgrowings of feeling and fiction, the pleasantries that spring even out of pain, the changes and chances of our condition, the incidental friendships and communings with society, the hurried and unremembered symphonies that gladden us between the acts of life. The nine letters that compose it are emblematical of the nine Muses, but their dominion is more mysterious and unlimited ; they preside in their collective glory over that profound and indefinite class of things, that have been received and sanctified at the living font of nature, but whose clime and complexion have never been entered in the nomenclature of man. Its four syllables are wafted on the four winds of heaven, and from the heart and centre of the universe it looks down in scorn upon the uncouth and incongruous designations of mankind—upon the distinctions of mere terms—and the eagerness with which we (most of us)

hurry through the shaded and healthful seclusions of the world, to wither under the sultry superfluity of a title, or experimentalise on the namelessness of a name. It is the untalked-of, unromantic thing of the hour ; yet, as a living poet sings about the bee, in verses that will last as long as the *Iliad*,

—————“ of ancestry  
Mysteriously remote and high ;”

much older than “ the tiger’s paws, the lion’s mane.” It is anterior to mountains and valleys, to forests and flowers, to the winds and oceans. It was, ere a tongue had spoken or an ear heard ; ere the live cataracts “ blew their trumpets from the steeps,” or the young nightingale had whispered its first love-notes to a rose-bud ; before vulgar and inharmonious names were given to the gentlest and most beautiful of nature’s family, or harsh and rugged objects received their appellations from the lips of music. It is the elder brother of the Universe—the ancestor of Earth ; it is nestled with Chaos in his cradle, and was contemporary with old Time before he was christened. It was originally employed to denote the absence of a name : at the present day it signifies a variety of things. On the one hand—indigence, inability, and the questioners of human right divine : on the other—opulence, intellect, and Sir Walter Scott. Methinks its genealogy would puzzle a society of antiquaries. The “ rarer monsters” of the world, the giants and genii, are so impossibly remote, so undateably ancient, that we are reduced to the necessity of doubting whether they ever existed at all ; and having no parish registers to refer to, we should, from its pre-Adamite antiquity, be sceptical as to the extraction of *Anonymous* itself, and might suspect that everything grew up originally with a natural label appended to it, specifying its name and qualifications ;

but that at this moment a nameless spirit, like those which erst inhabited rings and sword-knots, holds me by the button of imagination, vaults into my pen as its chariot, and flies along the sheet, raining as it goes such a shower of vital ink, that an article springs up anonymously, words vegetate and blossom under my hand—

“ Here buds an A, and there a B,  
Here sprouts a V, and there a T,  
And all the flourishing letters stand in rows.”

It may be as well to say a word upon the uses and abuses of Names. Let us for the present pass by the “alleys green,” the flowered lanes and sylvan windings of our subject—or at least let us merely peep down them, as we dart onward to explore the grotesque and oddly assimilated appellations that ring the changes of humanity. The names of Birds are charmed things, not to be written with a common quill ; they would lead us into a labyrinth of sound ; their syren notes would ensnare us, as sure as we are not Ulysses ; they are so many Orpheuses, alluring us regularly-planted writers to “unfix our earth-bound root,” to dance from our position—ink-stand, paper, desk, and all—into the witching mazes of ornithology. Leaving nature’s aviary then on the right hand, we come to the names of Flowers ; and here we are assailed by a bee-like band of appellations, that throng fondly and thickly around us with their honeyed accents, and offer up their pleasures and peace-offerings on memory’s lighted altar. What a host of sweet-sounding and sweet-smelling names !—for the scent waits upon the sound—we catch the breath of the violet as soon as the word is out of the mouth. What an array of humble titles ! words that seem expressly fashioned to fit into poetry—to sigh upon the breast of sentiment, or sparkle among the tresses of song. Honeysuckle—streaming away in sweetness ;



lily—a clear and delicate sound; there is a milkiness in it that is not unallied to the meaning. The words, both to eye and ear, resemble the objects they designate; and if frequently and fervently pronounced, will call down on the temples of life a garland of their blossoms and beauties. Thus we may walk through the whole vocabulary and cull a nosegay of names—glide in imagination from garden to meadow, from meadow to heath, from heath to hill—abandon ourselves to the delusive realities of a philosopher and poet before quoted, until the heart, glad of its wings, (for wings it hath)

—————“with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.”

But poets are persons that would keep us dancing till doomsday, and there are myriads of smiling names crowding the ante-rooms of imagination, and glistening like spangles in its train. We dismiss them with a princely movement of our pen. We pass with a gracious glance of recognition through long lists of living creatures; of herbs, trees, and valleys; meadows and mountains; rivers, lakes, “and all that in them is”—of shells, gems, marbles; and the no less dazzling varieties of artificial creation, which, though numbered in the “catalogue of common things,” come forth from the womb of beauty, and people the deserts of the mind with endearing impressions,—books, pictures, and all that world of things which one’s life-time is spent (in spite of Horace) in admiring. We come to human names, and the magic that belongs to them. We come to the names of lovers, to the Leanders and Heros of the heart’s Hellespont—names that are never pronounced but with a fine and tremulous delight (the reader *must* know of one such name) that sink upon the

silent spirit laden with the whispers of affection, and have indeed a charm—for it can only be told in verse—

“ To make the mountains listen, and the streams  
Run into milk, and the hard trees give honey.”

We come to the names of the great and mighty of the earth—appellations that, however mean and unmusical they appear, belong to nature's prosody and the poetry of the heart. They speak to us in dreams with eagle voices. They call to us from the ruins of long and clouded years, and revive our school-day hopes. They sound in our ears like the noise of waterfalls in a thirsty land. We delight to hear our children lisp them to us. Like the Lydian monarch, when worldly promises are led forth to die, we call upon the name of a Solon, and are saved from the fires of despair. The term may be one of no mark or likelihood in itself, yet its echo would waken a world. The names of Shakspeare, Bacon, Dryden, are by no means remarkable for their moral fitness or euphony; nor does there appear any very cabalistic virtue in the words “ Westminster Bridge,” yet I never cross that structure without expending a pleasant five minutes in imagining the particular stone on which Mr. Wordsworth stood, when he composed his sonnet there twenty years ago.

It must be admitted, however, that many names, from their frequent recurrence and application to common objects, have lost their freshness and singleness of power. Let the reader ask one of the Mr. Smiths—perhaps his own name is Smith—but if not, let him ask one of the Mr. Smiths with whom he must necessarily be acquainted, whether such be not the case. The name of Thomson frequently falls still-born from the lip; we think of an alderman, or an actor,

but seldom of anything in the shape of sentiment. A name once consecrated to genius and intellect should be confined, by royal proclamation, to noble uses. On the other hand, one is curious to know whence such persons as Mr. Pearl and Mr. Hope, and Miss Bird and Miss Love, derive their designations; such names are positively an enviable inheritance. Mr. Grieve and Miss Anguish are altogether as hardly dealt by. What a burst and depth of language are in the word Napoleon! It takes away one's breath. It lies in the hushed recollections of kings like a spent thunderbolt.

And this would lead us to expend our stock of exclamation on the more than frenzy and worse than folly of the mere ambitionist—the evanescent brilliancy of “the bubble reputation”—the “glory and the nothing” of a right-honourable name. We cling to the semblance of fame, and fancy we have secured a divinity; as the Tyrians, to prevent Apollo from deserting them, chained up the statue of the god and nailed it to its pedestal. We load our pen or purse—take aim at a project or a problem, and listen with transport to the echoes in the hollow hearts of men. We find the tribute to valour in the homage of cowards; the reward of efforts for freedom in the admiration of slaves; the appreciation of wisdom and poetry in the “sweet voices” of the frivolous and the ignorant: like the Roman capitol, we owe our preservation to the cackling of a foolish bird. In what are we wiser than Narcissus, when we thus fall in love with our own image reflected in a name? There have been (must it be said there are?) instances where men have purchased a name, with the labours of youth and the exercise of splendid talents, only to ring it as a death-knell in the ears of the compassionate and sensitive. The genius of these aliens to true glory is akin to the cunning of the animal that ascends a tree, in

order to drop on the neck of an unsuspecting prey. But a good name—one made illustrious by the union of intellect and integrity—by the enlargement of the views of man and the advocacy of his independence—is a triumphal arch that will endure amid the wreck of matter. It is a sound that will outlive the clashing of swords and the clank of chains. It will shine like a beacon-light upon the records of time, and may burn when distant ages are dim. And even the little halo which an observance of the simple charities of life will breathe round the humblest name, may have a lustre and a warmth that will dawn upon the mind in its wintriest and most desolate season. But the light must be vigilantly watched; for unless we are provided with the patent safety-lamp of fame, the very breath which was meant to vivify, may extinguish the flickering hope. Like the happy ancient, we may throw our ring into the sea, and be as discontented as 1826 can make us; but I know of no fish in these days that would restore it to our finger—even though Izaak Walton should come back in person to show us how to angle, and instruct us in the admired mystery of breaking a frog's legs “as if we loved it.”

But, after all, what an enviable lot is his who sits down under a voluntary *nominis umbra*, and still receives his sunny dividends at the bank of popularity—“eats of his own vine what he plants”—places his laurel-crown at his elbow, ready to put on when he pleases—listens to the odd comparisons and speculations he has provoked—hears himself mistaken for Prince Hohenlohe or Mr. Irving, and drinks his own health afterwards with the most cordial sincerity at a public dinner. He fancies himself into the Sphinx or the source of the Nile. He stands sentinel at the Pole



and thaws up all inquiry. Fortunate and close-riveted Iron Mask! happy and inexplicable Junius! thrice-blessed and not-to-be-guessed at authors of Scotch romances and English reviews of them!—And, floating with the current of this feeling, how mysteriously delightful must be the fate of a legitimate descendant of *Anonymous*—one who not only cannot recollect his own name, but who never had one to forget—who was born ere patronymic appellations were invented—an unlabelled phial in Time's apothecary's shop—"Nobody, in a niche"—a *bond fide* ——! "a deed without a name."

Only think of being distinguished, like *Frankenstein's* child of philosophy, by a —— in the bills of our little day. This to my thinking is an expressive and highly imaginative title: it embodies a great deal of the oracular inspiration of man, and evinces a masterly condensation of the pathos and eloquence of language. It is decidedly superior to Tibbs, and Tomkins, and a thousand other names that have never even pretended to a meaning. There is at any rate something too open and straightforward in its appearance to conceal the cloven foot of speech, or suggest any unnameable associations to eyes polite. It expresses the precise degree of praise we profess to bestow on ourselves, and includes the actual amount of good we say of other people. I will write an article on it one day or other, to show what a vast portion of popular talent and principle is comprised in it. And with such a designation—excluded from parish annals and Army Lists, from Court Guides and actions-at-law—one might steal into a blank corner in "some boundless contiguity of shade," where the Great Unknown was little known, where a *Political Register* had never been read, where the Catholic Question came in no



questionable shape, and the mellifluous name of Martin had never been imagined in the brayings and bleatings of animals. In such a corner, and with such a cognomen, a single gentleman might enjoy his *otium* without reading his annual obituary in the public prints, or being guilty of Diaries and Reminiscences. But he might enjoy anonymous books, and write anonymous verses. He could not deface his trees and windows by engraving on them, nor be expected to become sponsor to the third and fourth generation of friendship; but he might wander into the society of birds and fish, of woods and streams, unlike Democritus he became conversant with their language, and listened himself into a new and anonymous existence. Methinks the monarchs of the world might countenance and cultivate these hints to some advantage. An Anonymous ruler would at least be a novel feature in the chapter of Kings. Which of the crowned heads of Europe will be the first to cast off a doubtful display of title, and be hailed as Anonymous I.? Perhaps King Ferdinand would profit most from the change—but then the difficulty of casting over such a name the modest veil of oblivion; it would rather

“The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.”

Well indeed would it be for us and our nomenclature, if certain names at the sound whereof the human heart droops and sickens with disgust, could be blotted for ever from the record—could be made to die away like bubbles, into the “vasty deep” of *Anonymous*.

Its empire is already spacious enough, extending over one-half the globe, into the “bowels of the harmless earth”—monopolising the entire world of sounds and shadows—the space of the infinite heaven, its stars and starers—and the whole host (or nearly) of

the periodical pillars of literature at the present day. It lays claims to a moiety of human customs and character, and exhibits man in the situation of Death and the Lady in the picture ; one side is naked and without a name, while the other flaunts in silken sounds that have no appropriate texture or consistency. The geographers of humanity have not calculated the cross-roads : many a pleasant creek and corner, many a rural niche, with here and there glimpses of picturesque, are omitted in the map. Shall we only appreciate what is noted and registered, and shut our hearts to every thing else ? There is assuredly a new world of names to discover, of which posterity will be the Columbus. For if we glance cursorily at the misnomers on the page of society, the transpositions of terms, the nicknames and the *aliases*, we must admit that, in reality, there are few things or persons to which the term *Anonymous* may not be correctly applied.

There is, by the way, an anonymous philosophy slumbering in the veins of man when he is little aware of it. It is manifested in a notice which is (or was) to be seen at the gate of a church-yard on the Surrey side of Waterloo Bridge :—"Wanted some *good earth* in this church-yard." This is as delicate as the undertaker's "Lodgings to Let" stuck upon a coffin. Yet people write these things without suspicion, and rehearse them with complacency—pass jokes on death, and the warm pulses of life are not chilled for an instant. It is certain we are a race of anonymous philosophers.

Again and again it may be asked, what *is* there in a name ? and how is it that the wise world is dazzled and governed by a sound ? Man is really something more than a Macadamized barbarian cast forth upon the highway of power : then why should the rattling of a

ponderous title shake or disturb him? Let him not trust such specious prologues, but pass on to the "imperial theme." Or if he must be swayed by terms, let him not count the letters and criticise the tone, but let him weigh the names of Brutus and Cæsar, and ascertain which means king and which commonwealth. Above all, let him cherish a recollection of those without which all others are null and void—those which are enumerated by a favourite bard, and should be wedded to the memory for ever:

" You of all names the sweetest and the best ;  
 You Muses, Books, and Liberty, and Rest ;  
 You Gardens, Fields, and Woods."

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## QUOTATIONS.

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" Drawn from the stars, and filtered through the skies."—BYRON.

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OF all the many, and (thanks to a free press) the ever-multiplying blessings attendant upon the "glorious constitution" of literature, not the least precious and profitable to a modern cultivator of systems and syllables, in pamphlets, magazines and folios, is the right of Quotation. This is indeed a privilege so inestimable in itself, and so happily illustrative of the liberty of the literary subject, that we who live in the nineteenth century (and have seen strange things !) may be allowed a special note of admiration and marvel, that no prime-minister in the parliament of letters has, at any time, ventured to introduce a bill for the apprehension of all vagrant inverted commas that may be found trespassing in the sunny places of argument; and to restrain the poaching propensities of authors

in general, who are apt to stroll without a license into the manors of other men's genius. All is still, however, free and open ground, and the merest pretender that ever "thought" for a breakfast may quote Homer with impunity. Quotation is then a kind of fairy-land estate, of which every man who can muster some half-a-dozen volumes (besides a Shakspeare, which comes as it were of course) has the title-deeds in his possession. In it, as in an ark, are the chosen of many cantos congregated. Here shall we meet, in promiscuous communion, a type of all that can grace and diversify the physical and moral world. Here shall we find the cunning children of fiction nestling in the furrows of matter-of-fact: sylphids nodding from the crest of Alexander; grasshoppers and great men: the "green and golden basilisk" with the "white and winged dove." Here "dolphins gambol in the lion's den;" while the lion himself is stretched

"Beside the lamb as though he were his brother."

Genii and gallant knights pass to battle in an armour of rose-leaves, riveted with dew-drops; while the ladye for whose love they combat, and whom we carry about with us in some miniature quotation, can boast a foot that would fail to crush the thistledown, though trampling upon the domestic associations of readers, and upon creeds and commandments. It is a Garden of the Hesperides, without a dragon to watch over it—an Eden of liberty, having no forbidden tree; the apples we pluck in quotation are propitious as that which Acontius threw into the bosom of Cydippe.\*

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\* Acontius, it will be remembered, fell in love with the high-born Cydippe at the sacrifices in the Temple of Diana, an oath uttered in which, was, by a law in Cea, irrevocable. The youth, having procured an apple, wrote upon it to this effect: "*By Dian I will marry Acontius.*" He then watched his opportunity, and flung it into Cydippe's bosom. The virgin read it—thus inadvertently pronouncing the oath; and Acontius gained by his apple almost as much as Adam lost by his.

Shall we not rejoice then and revel in the glorious liberty of extract, and quote to the thousandth line? Shall we not have pages like the Pyramids? Who ever skipped a quotation, though it made against the interest of the story? Besides, how many books might be numbered that are valuable only in a solitary quotation!—as the oyster is esteemed for the pearl it may sometimes contain. How often does it happen that an obscure line finds its way into a periodical; causes an inquiry or two concerning its author; is requoted in every book that comes out during the next three months; and “sleeps again!” Lastly, how many pages have been preserved from portmanteaus, by a timely flag of truce in the shape of some well-remembered and often-uttered line!—some reciprocity of taste and sympathy, for the first time discovered, between the author and his reader! An appropriate title-page quotation, for instance, is more necessary to the salvation of a book than some people imagine: it is the “picture in little” of all that follows. It may be made to say more for the quality and nature of a volume than the preface and advertisement combined (which is usually not a little). We read certain books that bear a favourite line upon the title-page as we should be tempted to accept a pinch of snuff when assured that the box was carved from Shakspeare’s mulberry-tree. Again, the heads of chapters offer an inviting niche for the depository of some relic of a grandeur “untalked of and unseen,” which we have snatched from the open pathway of time, ere its wheel had crushed it to common dust. There is a vacant dreariness in entering upon the confines of a chapter, where no eventful sentence stands like a spirit to point the way, and supply a stepping-stone to adventure. We travel from chapter to chapter, and think “all is barren.” But when a



fond and powerful name, such as we could wish to hear taught in society as a spell to open hearts with, and kindle imagination among men—when the glory of a poet's verse pours its strength into the soul ere we plunge from the shore of mystery—we receive and retain an inward light that will guide us along the heights of hyperbole, and through the shadowy recesses of metaphor. Moreover, we are sometimes spared the trouble of plunging at all; for the poets express things so pithily, that we may gather the business and substance of a chapter from the line and a half at the head of it. To confess a truth, this has been our method of late years in much of romance-reading. We can illustrate the fact, that he who simply runs through the heads of chapters, together with the last three lines of every volume, will know as much at the end of the twenty-seventh (should the work so far emulate *Sir Charles Grandison*) as will qualify him to give an opinion in any coterie where inquiry is disciplined by a due politeness.

But, whatever may be their use or ornament to chapters and title-pages, the chief art as well as elegance of poetical quotations consists in leading their quick and tender branches, like a Tuscan vine, over the nakedness of prose, and clothing it in the blossoms and the fruit of an inspired eloquence. It is in the world of words, amid the dull but perhaps necessary detail of every-day events, that quotations come with a warmth and a welcome upon memory, and, like Milton's fish,

“Show to the sun their wav'd coats dropt with gold.”

They shine upon us like “new snow on a raven's back;” they bring us a season of flowers in the killing frost; and whether strewn on the grave of common-sense, or twined into a birth-day garland for the

temples of romance, the fragrance and the colours are the same, and are such as spring only from the stem of poetry. History herself should not disdain a snatch of fine verse; it would show on her like "a dew-drop on a lion's mane." In the dry and labouring essay, amid the windings of many words and the accumulation of antecedents, we hail their sudden and familiar appearances as patches of Nature's green to repose on by the way; their "dulcet and harmonious breath" animates a train of associations that dwell in the most sylvan haunts of emotion and sentiment; to their fountains of "loosened silver" we turn for a refreshing and a pleasant abstraction. Perhaps the author cited is one of those who, shunning the practice of the world, have taught the world to shun in return! whose poetry is too finely spun, whose philosophy is too quaint and mystified, for popular demand. Perhaps we have experienced the feeling which Mr. Wordsworth alludes to, in a poem worthy of the simplicity and loneliness of the sentiment—

"Often have I sighed to measure  
By myself a lonely pleasure;  
Sighed to think I read a book  
*Only read perhaps by me!*"

Two words of such a book, though possessing no peculiar signification, if met with in the dullest sentence, are enough: they call up, what has been finely termed, the "lightning of the mind." We feel an instantaneous kindness and reverence towards an author (together with a high opinion of his discrimination) who cites as it were the very language of our dreams—the secret converse of our own invisible spirit. We are almost startled at its being made public, and fancy that we have been at sometime overheard reading. He is forthwith admitted a member of our heart's privy

council. His hard words and bad reasoning are forgiven ; we shut our ears to his angular periods—remembering only that his habits and desires, his sympathies, perceptions and enjoyments, are under the same master-key as our own ; that he has struck into the same path, drunk at the same brook, mused upon the same bank, and plucked almost the same leaf with ourselves.

These are some of the virtues, some of the advantages of quotations. I have said nothing of the scarcely less important points of displaying a various reading, filling up a voracious page, or helping out some idea,

“ — Pawing to get free  
Its hinder parts.”

Think of it, gentlemen who write ! Cultivate the art—for an art it is. It is not enough to set a high-sounding line on commas, or as it were on crutches, and leave it to its own strength. It should be introduced at least with something like the pomp due to a foreign ambassador. Addison, where he quotes, is very felicitous. The bank should slope gently down into the water, and the water break with a regular music on the bank. Nor is every indiscriminate passage, however beautiful in the main, successful in quotation. A vein of exquisite meaning may run through an entire page, of which, if broken into sentences, no six words will be found with more than common terseness or melody. In other instances, an expression, highly fanciful and perspicuous in its proper place, is meagre or ridiculous in another application. We eye it, if quoted, as through a cloud of translation : its music, nay its very meaning, is lost in the element of prose. This is not without its analogy ; that which is *honey* to us, in our own language, is, by a ludicrous contrariety, known in one of the Oriental tongues by the designation of *mud*.

If, however, some skill and care should be observed in the selection and setting of the gem, as much more is required in guarding it from a flaw. It offends me to the soul to see a noble figure “cabin’d, cribb’d, confined”—despoiled by a dash of the pen of its native proportion and symmetry : in other words, to see a splendid passage quoted incorrectly. This not unfrequently occurs in works of established merit : it is an offence against the illustrious living, or dead, not to be lightly dealt with. An author may have so ransacked the vocabulary of his mind for a certain term, that no other can well embody his idea ; no man, therefore, should presume to substitute a single word in any doubtful passage, or alter it to suit his argument. It is an abuse of the invaluable right of appropriating to our own use the matured conceptions of another. Even the author’s name is, in some cases, given erroneously. An intelligent authoress of rank has alluded, in a celebrated work, to “ what *Shakspeare* calls, ‘ a fine, gay, bold-faced villain.’ ” It should be remembered, moreover, that he who can say (as all ought to say) with the gentle-minded old poet :

“ On bookès for to read I me delight,  
And to hem give I faith and full credence,  
And in my heart have hem in reverence :”

will not pervert any noble and incautious ebullition of feeling he may have discovered in them, into an authority for the support of harsh and uncharitable doctrines ; he will never lead their profound, and yet very simple mysteries through a channel of false interpretation. Neither is it quite well to rush at once into the enchanted circle of poetry, as though Apollo had said with a loud voice, “ let us quote.” The illustration should grow out of the occasion ; or it becomes pedantic and affected, and savours too much of having



been "at a feast of learning, and stolen the scraps." A well-woven sentence will "turn forth its silver lining" as gracefully as the cloud in *Comus*. There is a species of quotation, too, which has been and continues much in fashion among men of great and little genius, but on which I forbear in this place to dwell. It consists in *omitting the inverted commas*. Specimens of this sin of omission will be largely remembered. To adduce instances, would be to reprint one-half the books that have ever been written.

To public speakers quotations are of incalculable importance; they are as pillows of down to the over-spurred and fainting faculties; they add a fluency to the most polished expression; they rush upon the ear like the eloquent arguments of old and beloved friends. Danger is, however, sometimes mixed up with the delight. I remember having once half mistaken a very specious doctrine for sound theology, simply because the accomplished divine recited a passage in Milton, which I had made as it were my own by frequent repetition.

A notice of the authors most eligible for quotation must be reserved for another opportunity. All writers are by no means alike in this respect. Pope (it may be remarked by the way) abounds in quotable things, chiefly from his habit of making every line rest on its own merits—a circumstance that accounts, in its turn, for the strong resemblance his couplets bear to each other. Of Shakspeare, not a line but has been repeatedly, and will continue to be cited, as a commentary on the great and various volume of human nature. In this spirit, the unannounced author (not Sir Walter) of a fashionable, but acute and intellectual novel, with an extensive and available reading, selects from this one



grand authority the mottoes for every chapter of his work. It is a compliment to the divine poet, worthy of the writer in question.

And here I must stop to lament, that we cannot evince an admiring gratitude towards other excellent things by a like readiness of quotation : that we cannot, for instance, quote a star that we have been watching ; or a hue of sunset ; or a friend's voice, and his shake of the hand (I had almost said heart) ; or a beautiful picture—a Claude or Titian, for example. Hogarth must be singularly tempting : he is full of little bits that would quote with a tickling effect. In music we are somewhat more fortunate, when the ear and throat happen to go (if I may say so) hand in hand. But let us be thankful that with books we can always make retirement, and produce and replant in the world the golden fruit of adventure. We can, besides, introduce ourselves, material and immaterial, to an imaginative reader, in a scrap of antique verse : it is the most philosophic, as well as cheapest of portraitures—it saves one a fortune in drawings from busts and engravings upon steel. Such is my regard for these scraps (which are what the Biographer of Sheridan would designate as “fossils of thought”), that I had meditated an article *of* rather than *on* quotations—one composed purely of isolated lines, wherein the sound and sense should blend with each other as colours meet in a rainbow. Something of the kind remains to be tried ; but the experiment is a delicate one. It is to construct a cabinet of inlaid and curious workmanship—the forming a multitude of precious links into one matchless chain. Delight would, however, more than recompense the labour ; we should gather the richest images from a hundred different points, and with conscious fingers,

“ Feel music's pulse in all her arteries.”

At all events, the pleasure of simply quoting would be something, while the beauty of the links themselves would atone for an occasional deficiency of connexion. For, as I have remarked, the lustre of quotations gives a clearness and a colour to the blankest page; or to use a figure of Cowley's,

“ So lilies in a glass inclose,  
The glass will seem as white as those.”

In a well-penned essay, they are as “sweets to the sweet”—to an inelegant one they will lend a grace, though they cannot animate it into beauty. They may, in this respect, be likened to the dolphins that are said to have brought to shore the dead body of Hesiod : they saved from the deep what, after all, was only lifeless clay.

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£. s. d.

——“ These three,  
Three thousand confident, in act as many.”—SHAKSPEARE.

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LET not the reader anticipate a bill of parcels, or an article on the Currency Question,—things which will be herein treated with a philosophic indifference bordering on the magnanimous. I should as soon think of sitting down to get the Laureat's *Vision* by heart, or to turn an act of parliament into Anacreontics, as of seeking to obtain the countenance of the King's lieges by apostrophizing that of his Majesty, of the dispan talooned St. George, of his steed or of the dragon, as they appear (or disappear) on certain pieces of gold, of which Mr. Cobbett and his readers only know the exact importance and appropriation. Yet professing an enthusiastic and enlightened ignorance

of all figures (those of rhetoric, the amount of the national debt and the number of years necessary to the elucidation of a suit in Chancery, excepted)—I nevertheless proceed to celebrate the various and wonder-working merits of the celebrated trio above, with an intensity of veneration that would do honour to a loan-contractor. Nor, it must be premised, is a perception of the sublime and beautiful in their composition and arrangement necessarily based on a Ready-reckoner. Let us, for a moment, rise superior to the omnipotency of ruled account-books, and tables of multiplication: or rather let us make ourselves wings of bonds and of bank-notes, flying to the uttermost treasuries of metaphor, and bidding defiance to vulgar-fractions in the very security of our paper-pinions.

If all the languages of this glorified and gossiping world were condensed into one little lexicon, and all its word-makers and philologists jumbled into one mountainous Samuel Johnson, it would still be difficult to point out any three letters so mysteriously imbued with the qualities of good and evil—so pregnant with matter-of-fact and metaphysics, with fortunes and misfortunes, as the golden text above-written. The “milk of human kindness,” and the hemlock draught of discord and passion, are by turns distilled into the bosom of society through the fine but indestructible filaments of these simple initials. What, in art or nature, in history rational or romantic, may be likened unto them! We may search the map of magic, and the tables of science; the lines of a philosopher’s face, and those of a poet’s volume; but we shall scrutinise in vain: we shall find no indication of a spirit so full of vital breath and meaning—so visible, so potent, and so instantaneously familiar to the business and bosoms of all. The three heads of Cerberus hang abashed and

impotent before this more terrible triumvirate: on the other hand, the Graces themselves appear heavy and misshapen, compared with the gentle aspects and fairy-like proportions of these little alphabetical creatures. They are the only genuine "*veni, vidi, vici*," of human action and triumph; all others are counterfeit. Had Cæsar dated his despatches from Lombard-street, he would have seen and done honour to the distinguishing force of sentiment that characterises the greatest and most convincing relics of his land and language. As evidence of the eloquent harmony that naturally belongs to them, it should not be forgotten that they are indebted for their untranslated beauty to the same tongue in which Cicero pleaded and Maro sang. It may on the other side be argued, that they form a sort of Holy Alliance in letters, to the exclusion and debasement of many honourable conjunctions, and virtuous words in full; that they look like the basis of a system for cutting short our venerable and voluminous mode of speech, and making telegraphs of human tongues,—in short, to make us talk and write in initials (heavy days for orators and editors!) to depopulate our fruitful polysyllables, and establish a race of interjections,—and all this to afford free scope for the despotic and despicable vanity of a few legitimate head-letters—super-royal finger-posts to the science and syntax of the alphabet. They would, however, be more properly compared to a King, Lords, and Commons, pouring a profusion of splendid images and noble impressions into the empty pockets of mankind, and having each its period to mark the abbreviation of absolute power. But say they are a monstrous combination of enigmas,—an hieroglyphical epitaph on the tomb of social intercourse and natural simplicity of mind and manners,—the death-warrant of faith, and of that



commerce between heart and heart that interchanges the spicy luxuries of a dream-like existence for the refined and durable merchandise of intellect, flowers for fruits, a handful of water for an eyeful of sunshine,—denounce them as the mystic writing on the wall, of which Time, the interpreter, has already disclosed the frightful and immitigable meaning—still it may be asked, have they not introduced something into society to fill up the gap in our enjoyments? Have they not brought us intellectual tea-cups from China, and imaginative shawls from Persia and the Indies?—kangaroos from Africa, well-bred skeletons from France, and clergymen quite irresistible from the wilds of Caledonia? Are these nothing? Have they not procured for us a poet-laureat, cigars from the Havannah, and a dramatic licenser that baptises our milk-white melodramas in a Red Sea of ink, and sends them back shorn of their *ohs*! and *ahs*! and blushing for their innocent enormities? Have they not done these things—besides purchasing for us a view of the tombs in Westminster Abbey, and prevailing on very moderate-minded people to sing and dance to us at the rate of a few thousands of pounds for a season—and is there no faith in the necromancies of £ s. d. ?

Yet these are but a small portion of the blessings conferred on us by this triangular anomaly—this joint-stock company of markets and miracles—these weird sisters, the ominous three, whose spells are on the whirlwind, on the thunder, and the strength of the human heart. They entertain us with “prophetic greeting” in the desert places of society; and suddenly irradiate the stern, repulsive scenery of life with a simple “I promise to pay.” They let loose, to blow where it listeth, the wind of independence—that “lord of the lion heart.” They stand at once as the motto and the index to the world’s



volume: which, though it contains but few transcripts from

“The leaves of the Spring’s sweetest book, the rose,”

or any of those of which nature itself is at once the author and publisher, may boast after all its sweetnesses and its ornaments; but even these acknowledge the instrumentality of £. s. d. Nor is that the only book to whose alternate common-place and mystification they supply an explanatory note. Perhaps some of our politicians and novelists would find them not unserviceable in depicting, far better than any set of words could do it, their several ideas of pathos and patriotism. What says the “Author of Waverley?” It would look well and honest, if men who enter into a contract to write a hundred pages for thrice as many pounds, could incorporate these three letters with the title; they would help the reader over a great many unprovoked episodes and expensive digressions, and explain to him besides why the *finis* could not appear upon the second page. How would they show at the end of a man’s name! An F.L.S. comes near to them—an LL.D. nearer; but what charm of letters can compare with the inward dignity and outward fascination of the following—*N. M. Rothschild, Esq., L.S.D.*? There is a simple grandeur in this that approaches nearer to the sublime than any title (short of Right Reverend) that has hitherto been propagated—something that thrills us to the very purse-strings. M.P., K.G., and all other consonantal honours—even G.R. themselves, hide their diminished heads before these rulers of all the countries and capitals of the earth, from *Alpha* to *Omega*, from Arcady to Zealand.

To that facetious class of persons who occasionally divulge the *ennui* of “single blessedness” by advertising their inclinations as “not averse to the holy state,” and,

with a truly Adamite rusticity, announce the possession of a temporal and spiritual Elysium, in their own proper persons, that requires only the hand of an Eve to assist its cultivation, these letters would be found of singular utility. They would prevent all that prolixity of metaphor, about "congeniality of minds" and "domestic beatitude," that renders our advertising columns more valuable than those of the Greeks and Romans. Instead of an A B, or Y Z (a thing, as punsters would say, scarcely to be expected in such a quarter), the delicate point and expression of "Letters addressed to £ s. d.," &c., could not fail of provoking a host of epistles, the value of which, viewing them as waste-paper only, would purchase for their possessor an actress or a dowager. I have heard of an instance where they composed the sole contents of an eloquent letter of condolence, addressed to a widow "well provided for." In literature their effect must be instantaneous. As initials are now so fashionable, "Poems by L.S.D." would leave nothing of the rainbow of L.E.L.'s reputation, but "a green and yellow melancholy."

Although it is clear, therefore, that man may have more estimable companions in life than £. s. d., yet it is also clear that, without their co-operation he is not likely to have any. With them, as with the three men of old, he may walk unsinged through a burning fiery furnace; without them—but my pen, as we moderns phrase it, refuses to write; and like Sterne, I am "forced to go on with another part of the picture."

They are with us (or should be) in all seasons. At once the tree of knowledge and of life, we find under their shadow the hope and misery of things human and in-human. If we are born to a slip as an inheritance, or obtain one by chance or ambition, it will grow, if cultured, in the very hand—a switch to brush the flies off

in youth, a gold-headed cane in maturity, and a crutch to the lameness of age. We notch our days in it, and die when it gives way. It is, however, too often employed, not so much as a stay and succour to its possessor, as to goad the weary and laden, and lacerate the afflicted. It is sometimes used, not only to strike down the sacred altars of nature, but as a barrier to noble emulation ; not merely to brush the nettles from the path of pride and arrogance, but to turn aside the woodbine and honeysuckle from the cottage-window of a quiet and graceful retirement. Thus we are compelled to recognise in £. s. d. at once the alphabet of Judas, and the ritual of worldly exaltation ; the written law of the profits, by which we stand or fall ; a tragical tale in three volumes, a farcical absurdity in three acts ; a three-cocked hat, endowed with the gold-lace of “ a little brief authority ”—whoso puts it on, claims consideration as an official from the court of Plutus. They may be compared to the three sole faults that Scaliger found in Terence. They are connecting links from the statesman to the shopkeeper ; we calculate and accumulate, disperse what we have gained, and make a death-bed of empty money-bags. One half of life is occupied in expending what the other has amassed : we breathe an atmosphere of gain and loss ; one by one we pluck from our wings, whether for pens or shuttlecocks, the feathers that are to support our flight ; as the thirsty Scythians in the desert are said to have drunk blood drawn from the horses on whose vigour they depended for relief.

But are these symbols, so universally known and understood, exclusively the insignia of arithmetic ? Is there but one picture behind the narrow curtain of abbreviation ? Are there no earthly angels but those

that figure in collections of coins? Let the usurer build him a sarcophagus of guineas, and bury his living pleasures within it. Let him find poetry in his ledger and sentiment in a sum-total. I regard it only in the spirit of the innocent being who, on begging the loan of a book to vary his amusements, received a *Directory* from a wag; and on being asked his opinion of it, remarked that it seemed very well put together, but that he could not discover the *plot*. If he can see but one meaning at a time, let him blame not his spectacles, but his eyes: if his heart be not quite in the right place, let him heap the censure on his own pocket for keeping it buttoned up. We will put Cocker on the top-shelf, and select an unsophisticated £. s. d. from the ranks. We will view it through a microscope, and let every eye be its own interpreter, "after its kind." Lo! a philosopher comes to look; he analyses it in the apparatus of his profession, and discovers its signification—Life, Shadows, Death. A scholar appears, a worshipper of great names; he discovers in it a Lyncurgus, a Solon, and a Demosthenes: another, whose sympathies or studies are not carried so far back—Locke, Shakspeare, and Descartes. What may be its import in the eyes of a ruling libel on the race of princes—a maker of swords and fetters to a nation? Legitimacy, Suspicion, and Dungeons. The enthusiast pronounces an animated and luxuriant translation of Leisure, Sunshine, and Dreams of lovely and admired objects; the fanatic shrieks out a frenzied denunciation of Lucifer, Sin, and—*its consequence*. But beyond all these; beyond the raptured hope of the visionary, and the healthful consciousness of the philosopher; there is a fullness, an intensity of meaning growing out of these pigmy characters (as though the Nile were to come



gushing through the tube of a straw), which is seen and felt only by the lover of nature and the friend and enlightener of man. To his view they epitomise the great mysteries of the mind: they embody a power no less capacious than the universe itself—whose breath is like the air of heaven, and whose torch is burning far over palace-tops, and shines upon the high mountains: it is the spirit of Liberty, of Science, and intellectual Dominion. The terms may be contracted, as the body may endure bonds and the mind become enfeebled; but the sense is without a limit, and goes forth “trumpet-tongued” to plead the cause of mankind. It is in this sense that £. s. d. should be inscribed on the huts of savages and stamped upon the diadem. They should be the first letters taught in schools, that the earlier and better interpretation might counteract the deadening effects of that which infallibly results from a collision with worldly interests. It would be well if they were engraven on the ploughshare: that the spirit which is now alive only to the labour and thanklessness of its lot, might turn an eye of research into the by-paths of nature, and find a relief in simple and neglected sources which the mercenary hope of profit can rarely inspire: in short, that the spindle and yarn, like those of Alcithoe, might be transformed in the hours of rest into a vine and ivy. It might be a measure not unworthy the advocates of moral and religious emancipation, to check the deadly prejudice which has sprung up wherever these insignia of civilisation have appeared, by unveiling the happier and more honourable meaning to the common eye. Lectures may be delivered, and volumes written, to prove the excellence of one axiom and the absurdity of another; but the entire history of social kindness and mutual distrust is open to the



understandings of all in the little compass of £. s. d. The fertility and barrenness of that “three-nook’d world” can be seen only by contrast ; and human nature will continue to ransack the caverns of earth and ocean, until it be taught the intrinsic value of a flower, and be made to feel the beauty of a blade of grass. Prejudice now runs in favour of gold—another century may see our merchants bartering their manufactures for roses and daffodils. Those will be days indeed when the “blue-vein’d violet” passes current through the kingdom,—when man may grow his own money at his own window ; and instead of objecting to the sound or impression, may approve the odours and colours as they issue from Nature’s mint. Thus the £. s. d. which the present generation is so earnest in the study of, may prove only a dull riddle to the next : it will be a wise precaution, then, to attach to them an import which no time can render obsolete. Let us look to the great and paramount objects they may be made to indicate ; or we may find them like the bird described by Spenser, that turned to a hedgehog in the grasp of its pursuer. Finally, considering them in this their grandest signification, it would hardly be a matter of surprise, if, as certain signs and letters have been found or fancied in the cups of flowers, some future anatomist, with a little aid from imagination, should trace in the veins of the human heart a resemblance to these alphabetic phenomena.

## THE LAST BOOK :

WITH A DISSERTATION ON LAST THINGS IN GENERAL.

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“ Books, dreams, are both a world.”—WORDSWORTH.

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MOST men of letters—that is to say, most men who are in the habit of writing apologies and compliments—must have experienced, at least once in their epistolary lives, the unseasonable misfortune of breaking down on one of the smoothest roads of phraseology, at the very outset of a gracious communication. The “ Dear Sir” that stands in elevated loneliness at the edge of one’s paper, looking on the white expanse, is retouched and beautified three several times ; the dot is put to the *i*, and perhaps some little terminating embellishment to the *r* ; before the extreme regret or very ardent pleasure is turned to shape, and provided with a local habitation. Although not perpetrating a direct epistle to “ My dear Public” (to borrow the beautiful and affectionate language of the theatre), I find myself, on the threshold of my intention, in a situation similar to that above adverted to. I am embarrassed, like a new Lord Mayor, about the perpetuity of my title—that is, of my Last Book ; for authors, as well as aldermen, are sometimes destined to forego their titles at the end of a season, and mutually surrender their pages to the rapacity of the next in advance. To say the truth, I anticipate a supplementary extinguisher to the light of this Last Book, a sort of *post-obit*, an after-dated appendix. The word “ last,” it is to be lamented, is not sufficiently final to preclude the emulative subsequency of all we leave behind : we cannot close the doors of language on the thousand little beginnings that tread on the

heels of the safest conclusion. A term should be invented comprehensive enough to include those superlatively late comers that usually follow the last—the second edition of company expected to have arrived before, and the host of extraordinaries that have been detained by events. But, as words are at present, last things (so to speak) are generally the last things in the world that are last. Witness the thousand-and-one last times of the auctioneer, together with the several last appearances of Mrs. Siddons and others, and all the last representations of puff-needing farces and comedies. We will not stay to enumerate the many last poems, and last poems for some years, written by Byron; nor will we admit into the catalogue the last words of the celebrated Mr. Baxter, nor last speeches of any kind, nor the “Last of the Mohicans,” nor the last lottery. The inadequacy of the word to include contingencies and possibilities must be sufficiently evident. An inquiry concerning the “Lay of the *Last Minstrel*” would probably produce an account of some just published “rhymes,” written in very blank verse, accompanied by an anatomical description of a boarding-school Pegasus. Again, should we be unexplanatory enough to ask for a certain production by the equivocal title of “The Last Man,” we might be called upon to answer the anomalous interrogatory—which of the Last Men? Mr. Campbell’s prior and poetical candidate, or Mrs. Shelley’s subsequent and sybilline one? In short, there is no getting at the last of our never-ending, still-beginning language; and however we individualise them, each of the above-mentioned last persons may pertinaciously insist, with the little philosopher of a certain lyrical ballad, “nay, we are seven.” Nor will the “*positively* last,” even when put in italics, set us forward (or backward rather) a single step: it is only

opening the door to a comparative and superlative. Since, therefore, no circumspection, no flexibility of terms can settle anything as final but for the time being, I abstain from drawing out such phrases as the Last-of-all Book, or the Latest of the Last Books ; it being clear to the least logical comprehension, that the lapse of one day might produce a Later-than-that-Book. Accordingly, without putting syllables to the rack, I leave the Last Book to engender its bibliographical posterity, merely soliciting for it the patronage of that extensive part of the community, the Last People in the World, who will doubtless place it among the many last things at present so popular. Having now, it is hoped, in a truly modern spirit, excited the requisite portion of curiosity, I proceed to disappoint expectation with an alacrity not to be surpassed by the Northern Novelist himself.

Whether the "balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course," having been ordered to lie on the table of the Long Parliament, had been served up to me by the hand of the Protector, it would be impolitic as well as ungrateful to determine. Quite certain it is that I had sauntered through some ninety-nine pages of the Last New Novel (though least *not* last !) when my eyes involuntarily and uncritically closed—only as I thought during the interval of turning over a page—and, on the instant, I found myself fifty fathoms deep in meditation upon the stupendous pyramid of paper and pasteboard that has been reared by the labours of a single pen. I thought upon the hours of fine frenzy, the weeks of studious application ; of the fever of spirit ; the bubbling-up of the blood from the centre of sensation ; the thirst of glory, and of bills payable at sight ; that had been devoted to its erection. I then ventured a glance at the countless fingers that had been



set in motion ; the mouths and minds that had been fed and fascinated ; the daughters that had got scolded, and the dinners that had got cold ; the hearts set beating, and the curtains set fire to ; through the agency of the same solitary goose-quill. On what a slight point, even on that of a feather, does the great world of literature perform its evolutions ! These reflections occupied scarcely the sixtieth part of a second. The number of quarts of blood that pass through the human heart in an hour has been frequently calculated ; the number of thoughts that flash through the brain in one moment, never. I proceeded to enumerate severally, on my mind's fingers, the eighty thousand greatest living authors, each "attended by the pleasures of the world," and a well bound retinue of fifty folio volumes. The estimate overpowered me ; my senses were bewildered with black letter and marginal references. Through a vista of writers, all with pens more or less pointed, and all plumed, I descried the prolific hand of Hermes Trismegistus himself—he who is said to have composed (hear it, ye little essayists of a column) thirty-six thousand, five hundred, and twenty-five books. I instinctively groaned for the reading public of his day. Libraries, ancient and modern, stagnant as well as circulating, officiously crowded on my attention, and spread before me their contents and catalogues, darkening the summer sun. I was sailing "alone on a wide, wide sea," and every wave was a volume. The wide-leafed table before me seemed like an open folio ; the houses on the opposite side of the street wore a literary aspect ; every brick appeared a book—every tenement a library, to which you ascended by a flight of volumes. The white clouds were piled on the blue shelves of heaven, like a million reams of paper. The very ivy that fringed my window seemed hot-pressed



by the sun, and all the visible world awakened no other association than that of one vast bookseller's shop. The Long Parliament stood prorogued, Cromwell himself experienced an interregnum, and *Woodstock* fell to the ground. With it, also, the large folio table, the hot-pressed ivy, the reams of uncut cloud, the book-built domiciles—"all forms, all pressures past"—evanished into thin air. I lifted up my eyes, and looked—nay, leaped, over the stone walls of reality, and lo, a scene! which I will endeavour to describe to the reader under the title of

## THE GARDEN OF BOOKS.

It was situated in the centre of a vast and fruitful valley, planted with the shrubs and flowers of every clime and country, fertilised by streams formed of the clearest drops from every lake and torrent of the earth, from Helicon to the Themis, and fanned by all the airs of heaven—the rich gale that brings perfume and music from the bowers of Araby and Persia, and the wild exulting breath that plays like the spirit of freedom round the summits of the Alps. On all sides the valley was surrounded by hills of various altitude and aspect; some "high and hard to climb," sprinkled here and there with poppies and poison-flowers; others (a few) ornamented with green and gentle pathways. These hills, I could readily conceive, were the High Places of Criticism, over which (as I afterwards learned from a very perspicuous pamphlet called the *Whole Nature of Dreams*) every volume was destined to take its course in its aerial passage to this the Library of Life. The air was so serene and transparent that it resembled a crystal curtain, through which the naked heaven looked upon the world. And there were sounds, the slightest echo of which was a note of music; and

breezes that came panting from the red mouth of the rose; and colours, bright people of the sun, that might be regarded as little rainbow children, quivering and dancing over the calm face of the waters. It was as though the verses of a hundred *Lalla Rookhs* had been transformed, by some necromantic triumph, into audible and visible existences: as though the birds and blossoms that lay inclosed in the amber of poetry, had been suddenly animated and let loose upon the air. Every particle of the earth, every leaf that grew upon it, seemed instinct with the properties of the long-sought philosopher's stone; not an attribute of the spot but had been placed in the great crucible of nature, and had come forth a beauty and a blessing to all. There was a vividness of being that sparkled in the dullest pebble on the ground; the waters were clearer and the shores more green than any I had ever beheld; and the whole was canopied by a sky that might be said to have out-Italianed Italy. This tendency to excess will be immediately recognised as at once a detraction and a charm in the region of books.

Such was the garden wherein all the delightful poems, histories, narratives, dramas, sermons, ballads, tales fabulous and veritable, essays imaginative and demonstrative, that have occupied and elevated the mind of man for ages and ages, were gathered together in one common, or uncommon, family—exempted alike from damp and from dog's-ear—and breathing with a vital breath, the freedom and harmony of natural life. Such was the Valley of Books, where every page bore the imprint of immortality, and sustained a separate principle of being. And is it wonderful that objects which have so long lain on the altars of the soul, should at length catch a spark of the ethereal quality? Man, like another Prometheus, has informed them with the

fire of genius. They have a motion and a voice—there is a meaning in their very margins. They administer to our wants; they bring us tears, and merriment, and invigorating thoughts. They refresh us with secret assurances, and attend on us in sickness and servitude. Is it surprising then that I should have beheld them in a visionary hour, impregnate with the spirit of life; when I have deemed them, in cold and common moments, the embodied spirits of benevolence and wisdom? There are certain books which I regard as my oldest and dearest acquaintances—my physicians, my counsellors, my companions. A leaf or two torn from them would be as gray hairs plucked from the temples of a sage; as the rent mantle of Cæsar to the eyes of the weeping men of Rome. To me at least they are something more than machines. And here were thousands upon thousands. All that art, science, religion, ethics, natural and unnatural history—all that the industry of man, and the great mine of creation, could find or furnish matter for—were revelling in the “nectared sweets” of a new edition of life, leaping from bough to bough, or floating for ever on the air, like a million birds, with plumed leaves and outspread covers. Here were books gleaming with an eternal beauty, for which the casket of Darius that Alexander reserved to enshrine the works of Homer were a vulgar depository; books that should find no meaner sanctuary than the heart of the disciple of genius. Nor can such books, though hidden and overgrown with the weeds of memory, lie torpid and unproductive; sooner or later they will communicate their virtues and wonders to the casket that incloses them: as the stone whereon Apollo was accustomed to lay his harp was found to yield at last the very notes of the instrument. These were the productions of men that, according to the

poet, had "darkened nations when they died." In another place were clusters of volumes pregnant with a sweet but fatal knowledge, like the apples of old; others like the more modern one that fell upon the head of Newton—giving birth at once to a head-ache and a system—heavy with glorious omens; some like the golden one (these were poems) which Dignity and Wisdom and Beauty contended for on Ida; and not a few (to complete my plate of similes) like those that flourish in the Prophet's Paradise, from whose cores issue girls of such singular beauty, that at their pleasure all the waters of the earth would cease to be bitter. Many you might perceive, resembling the fairest and sweetest fruits, that concealed some hard problem at the centre, with nothing but a withered kernel to repay the effort of breaking it; others, that would seem to sting the very hand that wooed them, held honey enough within to mitigate the pains of life, and sweeten its tasteless draught. Here, perhaps, under the shade of a luxuriant bough, appeared a book that had floated proudly upon the full tide of popularity, and had as strangely and suddenly gone down,

"As though a rose should shut and be a bud again"—

(to select one from the many beauties of a gifted but luckless writer, whose existence was, still in his own words,

"self-folding like a flower  
That faints into itself at evening hour.")

In a word, there were volumes of every size and on every subject; some that emit a music even in the turning of a leaf, and some wherein a leaf that had escaped the knife would be a pretext for passing on to the next chapter. Many there were whose pages resembled the leaves of the vine—others that emulated the melancholy grace of a cypress branch. Here you would see a book



whose delicate and silvery characters had been traced in milk, which the warm gaze of enthusiasm would alone find legible; farther on, another whose bright but chilling sentences were stamped in snow. Anon came rustling on the air the production of a mind that deemed the rivers too shallow, and the hills too low, to perpetuate the history of thought; and immediately you would see a book whose author had taken a lily for his inkstand, and quickened his budding images with dew: you might have "kept it as a thing to pray by." One circumstance that peculiarly attracted my attention was, that many volumes had so identified themselves with the subjects they discussed, as to have caught the lineaments of their ideal creations. Methought it was a touching sight to see the form of a *White Doe* wandering, in its patient mournfulness, through the mazes of a *Forest Sanctuary*; it was a pleasant one to behold the long-loved *Lady of the Lake* spell-bound by the impassioned strains of a *Troubadour*, that seemed to have borrowed a note from every bird of heaven, and blended them into one exquisite intonation of triumph and tenderness. And then you were suddenly brought where *Manfred*, charmed from his "mood of stern disdain," lay couched amid the *Pleasures of Hope*, yet wishing once more that he could be

"The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,—

\* \* \* \* \*

A bodiless enjoyment, born and dying

With the blest tone that made him!"

It was a sight equally stirring (to awaken recollection of a time no less golden than our own) to see the splendid imaginations of Sidney, Spenser, Marlow of the "mighty line"; of honest Dekker and melancholy Ford; of Beaumont, Fletcher; Jonson the Rare, and Shakspeare the Gentle; embodied in a hundred volumes,



making circles in the air, and wreathing the fine old pages of Chaucer, like "a band of children round a snow-white ram." Milton, on swift but steady wings, breathed his ethereal air in solitude—displaying to the sun the tail of Juno's bird studded with its hundred eyes, to recompense him for the loss of his own. His themes consisted of alternate light and shadow—of divorce, and connubial perfectibility. The spirit of Andrew Marvell was there—and Robert Herrick, making a May-day of the long festive year. There too was "glorious John," shadowed from courtly contamination by the "Flower and the Leaf" of poetry. Pope, freed from prosaic deformity, lived in symmetrical lines. Chatterton, and Collins, and Percy Shelley, and Burns—poets of misfortune—were banquetting like bees in the summer-time. Many too there were, of a different tone and temper. Selden and Bacon—Steele, Addison, and Burke;—and a thousand more, in as many languages, whose very names would make a splendid article, but whom I must pass by in silence, not even whispering an All Hail! to Petrarch or Boccaccio. The choicest of those I have named seemed to occupy the very centre, the "seventh heaven" of the garden: for, it should be observed, there were various degrees of warmth and fragrance in the atmosphere, according to the good or evil done by the several orders of books. Many indeed never entered the garden at all, but were seen to hover about the banks of two rivers that gushed from the Hills of Criticism and encircled the valley. These rivers, I was informed by a work on the Heathen Mythology, were the last waters of Lethe and Styx. The truth of this was presently confirmed; for several volumes that came fluttering down the hills, and with difficulty contended against the drowsy vapours of the first of these rivers, dipped their covers in the latter

and were saved. Those books which were not of the purest kind, retained some of their mischievous propensities : as you mused beneath a tree they would suddenly drop from a bough, with some violence, upon your head—which I understood to be an exemplification of the undue impression they had made in the other world. A vast number, however, faint with the loss of blood, which had been taken to enrich the soil of Criticism, fell, after a faint struggle, into the bosom of Lethe—others dropped at once, without advertisement or epitaph. Many an ill-fated volume ; depending perhaps too entirely on a simple and antique pathos, on its power to draw tears, not making allowance for the new-invented water-proof hearts ; perished thus in silence,

“ Ere it could spread its sweet leaves to the air,  
Or dedicate its beauty to the sun.”

This is but a faint sketch of the Garden of Books ; I must, however, hasten to incident. As I stood, like Gulliver, admiring the beauty of a band of Lilliputian volumes, I suddenly beheld advancing from the hills on every side, with the profusion and rapidity of hail, what on a nearer view I discovered to be nothing less than a shower of books—every particle of which seemed pregnant with tidings and discoveries. An intense sensation diffused itself through the whole valley ; and every frontispiece gave sign of a strange and inward perturbation. The cause was soon developed. A decree (it was said) had passed the great seal of Destiny, that the Genius of Book-making should be banished for ever from the face of the earth, and that any volume found thereon after a certain period should suffer annihilation. Of books remarkable for what is called dry reading, it was proposed to make a fire large enough to thaw a passage to the North Pole ; of those found to

be of an inflammatory nature it was suggested that, by dropping them into the Atlantic at equal distances, a bridge might be formed, for the accommodation of gentlemen flying from the strong leg of the law. In this state of things, *sauve qui peut* became the only cry, and every printed sheet took flight to secure an immortality in the Garden of Books ; the greater number, however, fell unlamented into Lethe.

The shock sustained in the world was as that of an earthquake : methought I could hear, at that immense distance, the groans of compositors, the despair of authors whose fame was yet in manuscript, and the frenzied discussions of editors and publishers. Of these each appeared anxious to rescue some favourite volume from perdition. Mr. M. begged hard for a particular Number of the *Quarterly Review* ; Mr. C. for a copy of "his Lordship's last novel." Dr. S. delivered in two petitions : one for the salvation of the *Book of the Church*, and the other for the destruction of the first Number of *The Liberal*. It was hinted, moreover, in the *John Bull*, that a few copies of *Sayings and Doings* should be reserved for the King's own closet, in case his Majesty should be inclined to honour that work with a seventeenth perusal. A corresponding anxiety was evinced, in the Valley of Volumes, by several books that had been favourites of their masters while on earth. *Lalla Rookh* went sparkling through the garden, murmuring a verse which I well knew, but which had evidently adapted itself to circumstances : it ran thus :

" Oh ! if there be on that earthly sphere  
A boon to debtor and creditor dear,  
'Tis the last sure bill which an author draws  
On the firm that bleeds and breaks in his cause."

Meanwhile my dream varied, and a point of contention

seemed to arise among all ranks of authors. The order of fate being irrevocable, and sentence having been passed on every library, it was rumoured that one volume would be set apart as a final victim, and thus each writer claimed for himself the privilege of naming the last Book. Many were the hands held up, and many the candidates proposed; the *Book of Martyrs*, a *Law-list*, a banker's cheque-book, and the *Complete Housekeeper*, were severally nominated and negatived; when suddenly, to my great surprise, the shouts and lamentings subsided, the number of pamphlets and periodicals that flitted across the mountains visibly diminished, and the immortal tenants of the valley shook their leaves in the sun, and gladdened the air with music, as though nothing had happened. From a stray volume of the *Tatler* I ventured to beg a solution of the mystery. "Would heart of man once think it?" My pen trembles to its feathery tip, lest its verity be suspected. The Genius of Book-making, so far from being deposed, was in excellent health and spirits, and flourishing prouder than ever. In short, the predicted extermination of the tribe of books was neither more nor less than a *ruse*, practised by a committee of booksellers on the Author of *Waverley* (they believe anything in Scotland), with intent, &c., to make him write faster, and to alarm him into an abatement of the odd shillings in the—how many thousand guineas? mentioned as the price of his next quire of foolscap. Men will

"Make flexible the knees of knotted oaks,"

to attain a desired end. Whether the plan succeeded or not it was no part of my purpose to inquire.

I was also unspeakably mortified to find that the Last Book—for the altar of which imagination had reserved her choicest images—the paper whereof was



compounded of the robes and winding-sheet of genius, the ink drawn from the eyes and hearts of the enlightened, while the types were as the teeth of famished men—I was grieved to find that this *Last Book* was no other than a vapid tale of modern fashionable life, which had been advertised in one of those paragraphs that float on the surface of the daily press, as “*The Last Book* published by —— during the present season !” My indignation at this discovery broke the spell, and I was driven for ever from the Garden of Books : but not before I had taken an inventory of every volume I had seen there, with an epitome of the examinations they had severally passed at the Gate of Immortality.

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## PUBLIC DINNERS.

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“ Bare imagination of a feast.”—SHAKESPEARE.

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IN the lowest deep there is a lower deep. The discovery, though of diabolical origin, is not unproductive of consolation to mortals in their misery. We eat our overdone haunch with a lightened sense of the grievous burning, if news be brought that a friend’s house is on fire. The holder of fifty shares in a Short-road-to-ruin Company, deems himself a lucky man ; his neighbour holds five hundred. He that is going to be hanged has his comfort ; he might have been sent to the penal settlements. Deep is the wail and sharp the suffering of the widower ; but he might have been worse off, for there was a prospect of the patient’s recovery.

The man who has no dinner is truly in a grievous plight ; but his distress might have been aggravated. He has a pang less to endure than the man who, having



no dinner to eat, has previously paid a guinea for his admission to a sumptuous feast. The fate of Tantalus involves more hardships than falls to the lot of ordinary poverty. It is poverty in an ordinary always, and nothing to eat.

Let the poor take comfort, for theirs is a case of simple hunger; while the hunger of the rich is often attended with a sense of injury keener than the edge of appetite. The wight who wandereth from noon to dewy eve, with empty pockets and a stomach to correspond, merely endures the natural consequence of pennilessness, and has only the common and proper unpleasantness of famine to undergo. How grateful should he be, that he is not racked by the sensations to which that pitiable unfortunate is exposed, who, seated amidst plenty, has no dinner! and whose bodily craving is accompanied by a mental torture, arising from the consciousness of having paid one-pound-one for the privilege of being publicly starved.

Again we say, there is in the lowest deep, a deep yet lower. Dreadful no doubt are the sufferings of the dinnerless. Come in what shape it may, or under what circumstances, hunger is a detestable companion. Granted. But there is an injury, an evil, a pang beyond that. The dinnerless themselves are less to be commiserated than some who dine. There is one thing worse, incalculably worse, than no dinner—only one—and that is, a bad dinner. We confidently put it to the late Mr. Pope to say whether we are not right.

We have frankly admitted the mortification of paying a guinea for a seat at a well-stored table—three courses and a dessert at least—and returning home, after some hours of hopeless endeavour, with an appetite whose edge would cut, at the first application, half through a round of boiled granite. But harder than granite itself

is the lot of him who, in addition to the loss of his guinea, has left his glorious appetite behind him ; lost it, invaluable as it was, not in the natural and exquisite operation of dining, but in the anxious and protracted process of tasting multifarious dishes, in the vain hope of finding some dish upon the table, some one out of the several dozens, that a gentleman might be presumed to relish without forfeiting his character.

We doubt whether there *is* a deep beyond this lowest of all ; Milton's hero himself could never have found it out. To pay as aforesaid ; to sit in eager but mute expectancy ; to be excited and inflamed by wild, longing, doting, imaginative guesses as to *what* those covers may be concealing from view ; to lose no opportunity of discovering some slight matter not unfitted to be relished by an epicurean taste, beginning with the soup and ending only with the *finis*, whatever it may be ; to be disappointed dish after dish, duped and confounded remove after remove, until all is over ; and then to fall back, after a voyage of discovery that has occupied an hour and a half, convinced of the total failure of the experiment—too certain that there is nothing worthy of being devoured, for every dish has been practically tasted—conscious, painfully conscious, that in the desperate and protracted search after a dinner, the ardent stomach has over-exerted itself, and the fondly-cherished appetite has fallen an innocent victim ;—this, we must and will insist, is something considerably more grievous than the mere undined condition which we sympathized with before.

The non-eater, who has merely succeeded in nibbling up two round rasped rolls, one before covers were removed, and one during what is called “ the dinner,” goes home, be it recollected, with an enviable capacity for dining at any hour of the night, the sooner the better ; but how

should he who has experimentalized on each dish, consumed his relish for any thing, wasted his precious appetite in a fruitless search for something worthy of it—how should he retain the desired power, the enviable capacity to *sup* when he retires from the table! No, he is a man irretrievably ruined—until next day. He has been doubly taken in, and has a right to say, “Attack my pocket if you will, but spare my inner man; cheat me of my guinea, but don’t pick my stomach of an appetite; send me hungry away, but don’t poison me.”

“You envy me?” cries poor Claude in the play; “wise judges are we of each other!” Who has not been envied while hastening, about six o’clock, into the tavern towards which a numerous dinner-party has been making its way for the last quarter of an hour, and round whose door are gathered a dozen or two of sharp-set lookers-on, with noses keenly alive to every odour that indicates the proceedings within. Wise judges are we of each other, truly! The staring, longing exclusives at the door, imagine that we are a charming party of friends; that a glorious dinner awaits us; that we are going to pass a delightfully jovial evening; that we shall have a rare time of it! Wise judges! If, instead of sniffing, they were to see and share in the festivity! If, instead of spectators, they were actors in the entertainment! But they were never behind the scenes. They know not how vast the difference between the “imagination of the feast,” and the feast itself! It’s exactly the difference between perfect happiness and “*such* a headache.”

The mistake they commit is natural enough; but how odd it is that the very people who compose the public dinner-party fall into it too! They have been there before, on a score of occasions they have been guinea-givers and dinner-hunters, and yet they go

again ; not that merely—but they go with anticipations, contradictory of all their experience, of finding a pleasant meeting, witnessing an exciting scene, and enjoying a jolly entertainment. They hear that their friend Thompson, whose jokes are so devilish good, is to be there ; and so he is, only he sits with his back to them at the table on the other side of the room. Or it is announced that Viscount Thunderbolt is to take the chair, and they never heard a first-rate orator yet ;—or the musical strength is prodigious, and they confess that they do like to hear Hobbs and Pyne, and Miss Hawes, and the Boys, and the rest of them ;—or it is in the sacred cause of charity, and it tugs irresistibly at their hearts ;—or it is given in honour of somebody that they cannot for their lives refuse to eat a dinner in admiration of. And so they go once more. Do ye not, all ye Public Dinnerists ? whether ye be London-taverners, or Freemasons, or Crown-and-Anchorites, or by whatsoever sign ye may be known !

When all are assembled in the grand room, covers being laid for three hundred, the sight is undoubtedly “imposing,” and it might be not unamusing to view from the gallery the gradual arrival of the fat bald gentlemen who generally form two-thirds of the company. It is best to select a single dinner-seeker. Mark him upon his entrance ; see him make his way round the tables in quest of the particular plate that contains his card and is to supply his bliss ; note the grumbling looks with which he surveys it, disgusted with its locality, and the scrutinising glances at other names nearer the cross-table ; taking up a card and turning it over here and there, with a strong inclination to substitute his own for it. Then he goes and shakes hands with some half-dozen seemingly-hungry gentlemen, who, having taken their seats, have already begun to break off small bits



of their respective rolls, to look at their watches, and hint that nothing is so becoming in a chairman as punctuality. You will next see that he presently returns to his seat and does the same; and, as the example spreads, a considerable number of rolls vanish before dinner. Meanwhile, other people are late besides the chairman; and as they enter they survey the filled seats with little pleasure on their visages, and edge their way from the bottom of the room to the top, round the cross-table and down again, looking out for the possibility of a seat being reserved for them, or eagerly hunting for a cardless plate upon which they may seize, or a polite steward whom they may mercilessly arrest on his passage to the committee-room to receive the distinguished chairman. And now ("See the conquering hero comes") the distinguished chairman, ushered in by a score of white-wanded and blue-ribanded stewards, enters the room amid as much loud and long-continued applause as three hundred gentlemen, who are quite ravenous and decided against delay, can conveniently bestow; grace is inaudibly said in the sixtieth part of a minute; and then the public dinner begins to begin. It is exactly at this point of the entertainment that we should respectfully recommend the ladies in the gallery to consider the sports terminated, and retire accordingly.

What a clatter! How instantaneous, and how universal! What a startling and violent concussion of plates, forks, and spoons! What congeniality of sentiment—what fixedness of purpose! Leonidas and *his* three hundred were never more resolved and united than the distinguished chairman and his desperate company. There are six-times-forty feeding like one. The removal of the covers lifted the veil from the ruling passion—there it is, you see it in full play, or rather,



hard at work. Change but a word, and how applicable is the couplet,

“The fool consistent and the false sincere,  
Priests, princes, statesmen, no dissemblers *here !*”

Of each it might be said, as Kemble said of Kean, “He is terribly in earnest.” And yet if we pause in our survey of the general effect, where all seems to be vivid and successful action—waiters almost winged, plates skimming along the air, and elbows rivalling Paganini’s, though the noise is not music exactly—if we pause to notice individual examples, we immediately observe what labour-in-vain work it for the most part is. It is much-ado-about-nothing after all. Each man may have secured possession of some soup, but not the soup he ordered, for that has gone to a gentleman who petitioned for what *he* has. Those who have obtained turbot, look at it, lacking sauce, for seven minutes; and when they have at last procured some absent and essential accompaniment, all perseverance is futile, all intercession idle, in relation to cayenne, without which they have obtained nothing.

The story of one course is the story of another. Every man’s hand is lifted to his own mouth as often as may be, but every man’s hand is against his neighbour’s doing so. On first entering, there was a mixed company; but still they might all be gentlemen, being much better dressed than the dinner; now, however, a change comes over their spirit. There is a tacit but unanimous recognition of the maxim, that every man should take care of himself. The principle observable at each table, at all parts of each table, and with scarcely one visible exception, though in reality there are many, is

“That they should take who have the power,  
And they should dine who can.”

It seems to be a rule that the gentleman who first

seizes upon the salt should keep it. It is upon the same principle that the party who sits opposite the turbot, helps himself liberally to the fins, and having pitched a rude supply into one or two plates thrust over his shoulder by beseeching waiters, drops the fish-slice, and can neither see nor hear appeals until he has finished his fins. Whosoever fixes his fork in a fowl, becomes the proprietor of it so far as wings, or breast, or all that he himself has a taste for, is concerned. A slice of tongue is quite unattainable with your chicken—chicken and tongue *too* must always be considered unreasonable and romantic at a public dinner; but perhaps the desired slice is securable by itself. We make a trial; we send a plate, having little chance of seeing another—with an earnest, a pathetic appeal. That plate we never see again. With exemplary patience we await its return; time passes on, and the dishes disappear; we have become accustomed to our hunger, and having some of the nicely-rasped roll left, we forgot our application in applying ourselves to that. But at length the solid dishes have all melted away into a horrible mockery of custards and jellies! Even a wrong cut of the spoiled mutton is now irrecoverable. Grumio's "beef without the mustard" we might have had—but may not now. The tough turkey has become an impossibility. The dinner, shockingly arranged, infamously selected, and iniquitously cooked—bad as it was—is gone! and now remembering the almost longed-for, the all but necessary bit of tongue, we once more make trial with our own. "I asked you twenty minutes ago for a slice of tongue—I have had nothing—never mind." And ten minutes afterwards the slice actually comes; it is brought, set down before us, left there. Why, it must be tasted, then, late as it is. Its colour is inviting. Just as we have adopted so much of it as

seemed fairly apportioned to the remaining fraction of the roll, we feel, rather than perceive, that somebody is looking at us; and there, directly opposite, is a huge gentleman, who, having necessarily occupied two seats, had come into possession of two sets of plates, with a double supply of forks and et ceteras, all of which he had contrived, greatly to our loss, to make incessant use of throughout the dinner; monopolising all godsendings that came to our part of the table, and confining his whole attention to his own proceedings. And now, when he has performed his appointed task, when he has despatched all, when the very cheese charms him no longer, what is he to do but glance around him? And there, opposite, are we—we alone—eating tongue—tongue at that hour—when the cloth is rolled up, and the mahogany visible, at the lower end of the table! His eyes are riveted upon us. They reveal, clearly, too clearly, all that is passing in his mind. He has not the smallest particle of a doubt, that *so* we have been going on ever since the far-distant era of Soup; that the fork has been in incessant employ ever since the spoon was laid down; that we have been dining, indeed, with a forty-Dando power of perseverance! Imagine the position we are in. The tongue's rich redness is faint compared with the blush with which it is contemplated. The smile on our observer's face, his stare prolonged—they are not expressive of disgust at the supposed achievement of a never-to-be-discontinued dinner: no, they are expressive of *envy*. In one minute more, just as we finally lay down the fork with a portion of the untasted treasure upon it, the attention of half the table is attracted to the awkward incident, by his ejaculating in a very audible and emphatic whisper across the table, "Waiter, here, waiter! bring ME a small slice of tongue!—Waiter!—thickish!"

But all this time not a syllable has been heard or said about *wine*. The fact is, the less said the better. We never rake up old grievances; and though the wine is anything but "old," it is all the more grievous as a grievance on that very account. The best thing that can be done with it, is not to drink it; but, having participated in an unguarded moment, the next best thing is to forget your folly as soon as you possibly can. This will not be next morning—make up your mind to that; but soda is sure to be efficacious in the end; no headache is eternal. After eight-and-forty hours, hope will very possibly break in; while it lasts, this conviction will be deeply stamped on your mind—that at the tavern where you had so rashly dined in the company of the public, there are two settled rules from which no departure, even accidentally, was ever known to occur. One rule is, never to engage a cook who understands his business; and the other rule is, never to deal with a safe wine-merchant. The impression, however, will be erroneous; for it is possible to obtain, at the very same house, a nice little specimen of cookery for two or three persons, and a few glasses of port, properly so called. The real principle of business seems to be, to send away small parties with favourable ideas of the house, and to dismiss large parties with a conviction that the host's notion of "accommodation for man and beast" is, that what suits one will suit the other.

The wine, however—"port" is the name they very facetiously give to it—is on the table; and precisely because no creature more experienced or more delicate than Caliban, could drink three glasses of it, everybody may take a bottle. It is a pity that the prison-discipline philosophers do not make themselves better acquainted with its virtues. Some of that wine sent over to Sydney, or circulated freely in houses of correc-



tion, would be found incalculably valuable in the speedy infliction of severe and salutary punishment. Crime would infallibly decrease with the stock of wine.

To induce people to drink it, continual appeals are made from the chair, to the loyalty, the gallantry, even the religion of the company. A lineal descendant from Stentor himself is specially engaged to stand behind the president, and to give dreadful note of preparation for a toast by imperatively calling upon all gentlemen to "charge their glasses." Now and then there is the additional enforcement of a bumper-toast. He is always enthusiastic in his injunctions: no bumpers can be too full, no hurrahs too loud, no knife-handles too protractedly rattled for him. Something extra he ever insists upon—enough is far from being sufficient. (There was an example of this in his recent announcement at the Freemasons'—"Gentlemen, the memory of Shakspeare, with three times three!") This personage is a greater bore—the assertion is a bold one, but he is a greater bore than the rest of the orators. His addresses are beyond all comparison shorter; true—we admit this; but then they are open to this fatal objection—you can *hear* them! The inaudible orators are decidedly our favourites.

These constitute the great majority of the speakers. Verily, to them speech seems to have been given with a view to the concealment of their thoughts. Their addresses, however, are designated in the papers of the next morning, as "neat and appropriate." As far as dulness went, appropriate they were, and neat as imported from the latest edition of the "Public Speaker's best Companion." The manner in which her Majesty's health was proposed would furnish, if anything possibly could, an excuse for disloyalty; the exposition of the objects of the charity, or the merits of the individual



honoured by the meeting, would have been utterly frustrative of its intention, but that it had the advantage of being entirely unheard; and the eulogy upon the distinguished chairman would have been an offence beyond atonement, only it had the effect of waking him up, and urging him to expedition with the other toasts, the most important one in his regard being now perpetrated. As usual, however, he is so ungrateful as to consume five minutes in mumbling his thanks, during which we profit by the example he had previously set us, and fall into a doze; from which, after dreaming that we have performed a voyage to Oporto, and are just demanding the accommodation of a bed at the sign of the "Half-bottle and Headach," we are aroused by a pleasing commotion, effected by the departure of the select from the cross-table, and the election of a second chairman, to superintend the unfinished dreariness, and advance the unprofitable dissipation of the evening.

Among the anomalies of these public dinners, this is not the least—that those who enjoy the best fare should be the first to go. The seats of honour at the president's table are occupied by lucky people. They all *dine*. A real cook is conceded to *them*. And they drink decent claret after dinner. Warren is not their wine-merchant, as he is ours. Yet most of them depart at ten o'clock, moved possibly by a pitying desire to shorten the sufferings of the rest of the company. To us it has always appeared most natural that the general body of the guests should rise very soon after dinner, and depart with precipitation; the task of completing the social toils of the night being left to the privileged and hospitably-treated few who had monopolised the solid and liquid luxuries of real civilisation. The reverse of this happens. And the reverse of reason seems to govern the bright eyes that rain influence from the

galleries. How they keep open! The ladies are often found to remain long after their handkerchiefs have had a chance of being waved, or a cup of coffee a hope of being presented to them. It might almost be supposed that they liked starvation extremely, and were collectively in love with every individual steward who made it his special business to be unmindful of their comforts.

We have described the privileged few at the table of honour as lucky people. They are in truth lucky in dining at any price; and many of them are invited guests, presented with tickets, that the board may be duly graced, and the subscription-list munificently filled up. Herein is some consolation to the mob below the dais, who dare not drink, and yet can't comfortably endure three hours of thirst. The privileged have partaken of unquestionable sherry; but they have left behind them a draft more than equal to the many they have enjoyed. They have not swallowed ink, ill-disguised, as we have; yet ink is associated with their dark and sour recollections the next morning. They wish they had ordered Messrs. Drummond to pay only *ten* pounds to Blank Somebody, Esq., the honorary secretary! The repentance, let us say, is ungrateful. Had they not their recompense? Had they not the reward of virtue? As great Sir John says, "Were ye not paid?" They heard the acclamations with which the announcement of their munificence was followed. They listened with delight, until they could detect the distinct operation of every pair of hands clapped together, and of each separate knife with which the edge of the mahogany was visited. As they took their departure down the room, they might have noticed the deepened dents upon the long line of table. And were they not sensible of the greatly-diminished applause at the ten-pound contribution which came next? Were they deaf to the

feeble tribute with which the succeeding five-pound gift was greeted? They might almost be so, for it was scarcely audible. Yet that was loud in comparison with the mockery of admiration that celebrated the two-guinea donation ; though this in its turn doubled the welcome accorded to the solitary guinea ; and of the fifteen boot-heels that impressed the floor then, only three were enthusiastic when the melancholy "one pound" was announced—when gradation could go no lower, and generosity had driven its hardest bargain !

Lest this should lead to mistake, let us explain, that at these public dinners the applause accorded to a benefactor, as the list of donations is read over, is almost invariably apportioned to the sum given, and not to the understood sense of the capability of the giver. The single sovereign of the poor man, whatever respect may attach to his name, is passed by as a mite unnoticeable ; but the twenty-pound cheque of the rich man is greeted as an event illustrating the nobleness of human character. A popular name now and then carries it against all others, but in a way that only serves to show how very little the sense and feeling of benevolence enter into proceedings assuming that pure and sacred character. But this is lecturing. If out of place, skip it.

Meantime we skip to a conclusion. The second chairman makes us almost sigh for the restoration of the first. The sayer and doer of nothing is preferable to the producer of noise. To stay now is impossible, for we can hear every word that is uttered. Let us, moreover, warn the tarrier in taverns, that execrable potations, when you become used to them, are apt to acquire an insidious pleasantness. Drink from habit, and you are done. The wine is taken, not tasted ; and the consequence is, what was hinted at before, *such* a next morning ! For ourselves, we are home while it is

yet night: one guinea lighter, and five hundred hats heavier about the head. But we were hasty after all in complaining of a deficiency of dinner. We had more than was suspected. Preparing for bed, we discover much superfluous melted butter in the coat-pocket (the waiter was agitated); and a quantity of peas, together with an oyster or two, escaped from a sauce-boat, that had been jerked in their passage to the table, very snugly into the space occasionally observable between the hind part of a gentleman's coat-collar and his neck, as he sits at dinner!

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### CONTENT OR NOT CONTENT.

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“Not content, for the following reasons.”—*Vide* PEERS' PROTESTS.

“ARE you content?” asks the Duke, when he has doomed old Shylock to beggary and the abjuration of his creed. “*I am content*,” responds the miserable Jew.

So say—with exactly the same degree of truth—most miserable Christians, when they have arrived at the hopeless point: when they can no longer help themselves. While they possess this power, they do not even put on the affectation of content, though they make amends for a total absence of the virtue, by devoutly recommending it to their neighbours. George Robins is, in this respect, mankind's epitome; he holds it to be every other mortal's first duty to be “contented with his lot.” It is our business, he would argue, to take the lot which is adjudged to be ours, with the duty upon it. We discover that the tobacco which was put up at twopence-farthing, and knocked down to us at



twopence-halfpenny, means neither more nor less than six thousand pounds of damaged shag at twopence-halfpenny per pound; and, stern as the sternest moralist of them all, he has no comfort for us beyond the cold advice—Be contented with your lot. We complain of the mistake, the hardship; his hammer answers us, but his voice is silent. He has not a word to waste upon a man who is dissatisfied with his lot. His continual and ever-increasing familiarity with what is most sacred to others; with life and death; the preparing to depart, and the departure; that “going, gone” of his, which is the whole history of man; has converted his native sensibility into a philosophical substance, hard as ebony, which he could fling in the teeth of all fools who, ignorant of the final meaning of those two solemn and significant words, “going, gone,” are so surpassingly silly as to be discontented with their lot!

There is modesty in human nature after all. If anything particularly good come to our share, we are apt to think it *too* good for us, and are hardly content to keep it. If a fine haunch fall in our way, we send it to a friend. So with the virtues. How few of them we ourselves exercise, compared with the number we prescribe for daily use, by our acquaintances! If people would but follow our advice, they would be angels; but as they only follow our example, they are something a little lower. Thus it is, that although we are constantly warning others to be content, they are no more contented than ourselves!

Although this content be classed with the virtues, it is but a conditional one. A free-born being is suddenly cast among slaves, stripped of his birthright, and degraded to the brutish level—content, here, becomes a vice. A stupid angler is jerked into the stream by the stupider fish he would have drawn out of it—content in



this case is an absurdity. Sometimes it is a folly, sometimes it is a crime. Now it is sheer cowardice, anon it is indolence, much oftener it is hypocrisy ; but most frequently it is the result of that comfortless conviction at which the poor Jew arrived, when the document which doomed him to wretchedness and despair was sent after him for signature.

In fact, there is scarcely such a thing as true content—continuous, unyearning, and cherished upon principle—apart from the lot, whatsoever it may be, that comfort or custom hath made agreeable to us. An apparent case of true content once arose, in connexion with the very play we have referred to. An actor, who perhaps still fills some small space in the public eye, had for years “ gone on,” as the phrase is, for the peculiarly unimportant part of Tubal. Now it is notorious, not only that Tubal is a very miserable little character, with less than six lines to utter, but that it is a very disagreeable character in other respects ; the costume, in the theatre’s unreformed day at least, was painfully ‘guy’ish, and the laughter of the spectators was generally loud. To find an actor *content* to be the representative of Tubal, was to find a miracle. Gibbons had played it for years, and then confessed that he despaired of working it up into tragic effect.

“ Sir,” said that performer, when he came off the stage, after completing his forty-first representation, “ it’s of no use talking : John Kemble couldn’t do anything with such a part.”

Tubal therefore is exceedingly disliked in the profession, and for one reason, amongst others—that every gentleman who “ goes on ” for it, conceives that he ought to play Shylock. But *our* Tubal was *content* with the character. Its insignificance suited him, and to the audible derision he had become accustomed. He

had played it many, many times to Kean—Edmund Kean; and it had become a reminiscence with many playgoers. Above all, he had that contented mind which is a continual feast, and it feasted with the Jewish Tubal. Suddenly, the contented actor is deposed; the part is given to another; he is Tubal no more. Now shall we test that principle of contentment which in him seems the guiding-star of his whole moral being. He was content with that which was a grievance to others; is he content to do nothing, instead of doing the disagreeable? Is he satisfied to play something else, and deliver nine words instead of fifteen? No, all the virtue vanished at the first trial. This Cato told the gods he was *not* satisfied. Instead of sitting down under the tranquil and abiding shadow of content, he tore his hair, and stormed about after the fashion of Kean himself in the great scene with Tubal. He supplicated for a re-installation in vain. Nightly has he played since, but with a broken spirit, and his soul will know contentment no more.

This case is cited here at some length, because it really did seem to be a case of true content; but it was simply an instance of eccentricity of taste. The stage philosopher *liked* the character of Tubal—that was all! A mystery, admitted; but less a mystery than the lurking-place of content.

It must frankly be owned that content may and does exist—that is to say, in company with a complete gratification of our desires. When we are in possession of the thing we like, there is small doubt but that we are contented with it for the time being. As resignation is said to be much more perfect when the object we resign has ceased to have any attraction in our eyes, so contentment is unquestionably more sincere when the condition in which we entertain it is exactly suited to

our fancy, and therefore all that we could wish. But this condition is the exception to the rule of life—hence the scarcity of content.

“Content is the brightest jewel of the mind ;”

which is as true as truth generally is in copy-books ; but then the diamond so often turns out to be paste. So many boots pinch that are highly polished ! We encountered lately an apparent example of content in a quiet country-residence, quite a sylvan snuggerly as it is called ; a freehold paradise that was never “to be let” ; no noise, no smoke ; all clear, tranquil, happy, and suited to the retired and musing tastes of its master. It turned out—yes, that’s the word—that its master wanted to turn out also. He lived there, not because it was his choice, but because it was “his own.” It was not content that kept him there so long, but convenience. When you choose the least of two evils, does it follow that you are contented with the smaller one because it *is* the smaller ? Our rustic moralist was panting to be a rover in town. He seemed a creature that would shrink, like a sensitive leaf, at the touch of a city—a being framed to steal through life, as though it were ever night-time, without making the least noise. On the contrary, his ambition was to

“Flame in the forehead of the morning sky,”

and cut a tremendous dash in London. While his soul seemed to crave no occupation, no delight, but to creep along under hedges in a green coat and drab gaiters, it was pining to become the centre of a circle, and the founder of a fashion. The demure and modest simpleton, as town-breeding would have designated him, confessed that so far from “shunning the public gaze, his pride would be “to drive a tandem with two large black dogs with him in front to keep his legs

warm, and a black servant behind blowing a key-bugle." While angling twelve hours at a stretch, he was only brooding over the chances at hazard; and while tenderly training his roses, he was dying to live in town and wrench off a knocker nightly.

"Never be a schoolmaster!" was the last injunction that rang in our youthful ears as we sprang, liberated for life, out of the dominie's dominions. How that old clergyman hated the life of a schoolmaster, and how regularly he had admonished us to be always contented with our lot! The gallant officer who finds himself, at sixty-seven, without a livre or a stiver, cries, "Now, if I had been put into a merchant's counting-house!" and the speculator, at seventy-five, wishes he had been born a quarter of a century sooner, for he should have made a million had the war lasted. But to show where content is not, is "to run the great circle and be still at home."

True content must, in any case, be very short-lived. The image of it may be imagined, rubicund and riotous, over a jolly full bottle at night, but not with a green and yellow melancholy in the morning. Suppose content has the gout, or wants a dinner!—evils that fall to the lot of rather more than are ever satisfied with them. To picture content stretched on the rack, is not an unreal or even a fantastic view of the ordinary condition of that virtue; since beneath every roof, wherever mortal infirmity finds its needful habitation, there is a rack more or less screwed up, on which humanity stretches itself either compulsorily or voluntarily. And if people were to speak plain English ("a language," as Mr. Evelyn observes, "which so few of the English do speak") the phrases "Will you join our party of pleasure?" or "Let us have the other bottle," would not be more frequently in their mouths, than "We are



going to put ourselves to torture, will you join us?" or "The rack is ready, will you take a turn?"

The poets tried for a long period to palm content off upon us as a prime virtue, ready for use at every season. They always pourtrayed this capital quality as resident in a cottage—shabbily clad, and with a sharp appetite, which the good creature treated with silent contempt. The poets found the virtue sufficiently fabulous, and they left it more so. They never imagined, in those loyal times, that content could be the occupant of a throne. There, "pale *Discontent* sat crowned;" while charming cherry-cheeked Content was blooming in beggary. Concord had her temple, Fame too had hers; Peace had her pavilion, and Bliss forsooth must have her bower; Pleasure had her palace, and even Indolence had her castle, nothing less; but poor Content never got beyond a cottage. This it is to be a modest, humble, anything-will-do-for-me kind of virtue. The poets forgot that Content was at least as likely to take up her everlasting rest amidst the good things of this life as amidst the want of them. Poets are worldly fellows after all: they will not allow a meek virtue to be rewarded: it must always be "its own reward."

However, they have now abandoned the theme. There has not been such a thing as a new ode to Contentment written during the last quarter of a century. Not the most daring and imaginative of our young bards has taken such a flight as that. Yet such odes during the last century were the staple commodity of our poetry. During the American and French wars, people read and ruminated about nothing but contentment. The word has not been mentioned in public since the peace. Content would militate terribly against the acquisition of capital, and affect very materially the



course of our exchanges. It would have stopped short at the old oil-dripping lamp-post ; it would now stop at the gas-crowned column, and put an extinguisher on the Bude light. It would have forbidden a single railroad to be cut ; and would now forbid the establishment of a union between the earth and the moon, on the principle of that which already exists between England and Ireland.

Content, in short, to judge by the practice of the world, and not by the theory which the world maintains when neighbour advises neighbour, is an excellent thing, a very excellent thing indeed, when there is no other comfort left. The real Cottage of Content, therefore, is the Refuge for the Destitute. What contradictions we are made of ! When a man is quite without resources, when he is done up, we bid him be content ! It is fruitless to advise those who have much, to be satisfied while they can make it more ; it is absurd to advise those who have little, to abstain from making it much ; it is only those who have NOTHING, who can ever be CONTENT.

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#### SOME ACCOUNT OF THE INCONSOLABLE SOCIETY.

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“ There’s such a charm in melancholy,  
I would not, if I could, be gay.”—ROGERS.

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SOCIETIES are commonly established either for political, scientific, or social purposes. The purpose of the society, of which, through the kindness of a broken-hearted friend, we are about to afflict the world with an account, embraces all these. Its great maxim is, that “ Man was made to mourn.” It professes to include all mankind within its circle, and to have no limit but

the cradle on the one hand, and the coffin on the other. It is based upon what may justly be designated the Greatest Wretchedness Principle; and it would endeavour to extend the bond of union among men, by convincing them that every living thing has something in common with every other living thing. That something is—Sorrow. How desirable it is, then, that this one thing in common should be clearly and thoroughly understood by all; that its principles should be comprehended, its properties analysed and demonstrated.

The objects that call other societies together are, as we have said, various; but they appertain only to the interests of individuals or classes, anxious to discover plausible answers to the every-day questions—"What is knowledge?" "What is wit?" "What is power?" &c. But all the world (as well as his wife) is interested in answering the one grand question, "What is sorrow?" which some people take to be a paraphrase of the popular question, "What is taxes?" There is the point at which universal inquiry should begin. But such is human ignorance, that while all feel it, few know anything about it. As a science it is utterly uncultivated. We assume the shadow of it now and then—at a funeral—and forego the reality. People are stupid enough in too many cases to content themselves with sham griefs. How many persons are we acquainted with who have had abundant distresses in this world, without really relishing any! How many might be numbered who have been upon occasions completely miserable without knowing it! How many more might be counted up who have dribbled away their tears, frittered away their wretchedness, wasted all the woes they had, without doing themselves the least service, and in a manner no man knows how! In the one case, we have the miser, who does not enjoy his wealth

because he will not use it; and in the other, we have the spendthrift, to whom riches give no pleasure, because he makes them take to their wings. If people will not reduce their sorrows to a regular system, they can never experience the real luxury of woe. If they would know what sorrow is, they must qualify themselves for a seat in the society, to which we are about to introduce them.

The Inconsolable Society is composed of a body of English gentlemen whose social principles are expressed in the motto at the head of this paper,—they would not, if they could, be gay. They are practical expounders of the Rogersian philosophy. They are thoroughly in earnest in their griefs. Their tears are rivers, and their sighs hurricanes. They have no enjoyment in life, if not truly miserable; and are never content but when they are beyond the reach of consolation. As Sorrow holds the key that unlocks the gate of Wisdom, it will be inferred that this society is a club of sages,—duly impressed with the conviction that ignorance is bliss, that the idiot is a happy fellow, that the half-knowing are tolerably comfortable, but that the wise only have the distinction of being supremely wretched, as it is the man who knows everything who alone knows that he knows nothing. Each fellow, therefore, holds rank and obtains estimation among the rest as a man of virtue and genius, according to the depth of his despair and misery; in other words, his intellect is not judged of by the breadth of his forehead, but by the length of his face.

We have used the term “fellow;” those who compose this society are not, however, Fellows, but Wretches. Thus, while it is usual in other societies to refer to an individual as the gallant member, or the honourable and learned gentleman, it is the custom in this to say, “I rise to second the motion of the unfortunate wretch,”

or, "in reply to the miserable wretch who has just fainted," &c. The speaker is frequently received with deep sighs and long-continued sobbing, but these are the only interruptions he is likely to experience. No laughter was ever heard in the assembly, save that which claims "severest woe" as its parent.

It is implied in the title of the association that every wretch, upon his entrance, undertakes to leave hope behind. It is considered to be a point of honour not to listen to any story, to view any spectacle, or to contract any habit that might have a tendency to raise the spirits, or insensibly to weaken the charm of that melancholy which forbids the wish to be gay even where the power exists. The sorrower must be inconsolable, or he is not strictly and in spirit a member of the society. His rueful countenance must not, therefore, betray a sly and peeping spirit of humour at the corner of the mouth or in a twinkle of the eye—between the tears, "as it were;" his mourning suit must not be lined with flame-coloured taffety.

Nevertheless, it must be especially noted that these necessary provisions for the due melancholy and deep-seated despair of the club, by no means preclude the entertainment by its members, collectively or individually, of many of the ordinary topics that engage the conversational powers of other societies and of the community in general. It must not be supposed that, because the mourner is pledged to preserve his sorrows in all their original sacredness, he is not to discourse on subjects which are by courtesy termed entertaining, to visit what are jocosely designated places of amusement, or to herd with dogs called droll and fellows styled jolly. Perhaps the very reverse of an abandonment of what are usually described as recreations, may be essential to the efficient cultivation of the required despondency.



Of comfort, certainly, no regularly admitted Inconsolable must speak ; but, on the other hand, there is no occasion for him—

“ To talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs ;”

for, with precisely the same effect upon his feelings, he may talk of bards, of songs, and theatres. The rules that govern the Inconsolables by no means, for example, preclude a visit to Drury-lane on any night when what is called a legitimate comedy may be represented ; there will not be the least danger of the member’s forfeiting caste in the society, or of losing for a single instant any portion of the weight upon his spirits, or the intense gravity of his look. To select a night, however, when a tragedy is played might be deemed injudicious and culpable, as some risk must be incurred of a liveliness incompatible with perfect solemnity of mind. Should any of the more inexperienced adopt this perilous course, it is possible that they take care to weep piteously before the tragedy begins ; remembering the plan adopted by Richelieu’s listeners, who laughed before he opened his mouth. “ And very right,” said Walpole ; “ if they had waited, they would not have laughed at all.”

Nor do the rules deny to anybody the privilege of dining with Lord——on a state occasion, or with Mr. —— when he insists upon your taking a family dinner with him. In fact, there are a hundred well-known dinner tables about town, at which you may be seated three hours per diem per annum, and be sure to meet with neither dish nor drollery at all calculated to excite either stomach or spirit beyond the point of a total suspension of enjoyment. To these you may go, not merely with impunity, but with advantage ; for as “ true no-meaning puzzles more than wit,” so dulness is more afflicting to him who comes in contact with it than “ comfortless



despair ;” and hence the diner-out may derive an additional shade to his misery, especially if, as we have already hinted, he should drop into a theatre on his way home.

Another exemplary mode of working out the principles of the society, and of acquiring a character for confirmed and unaffected wretchedness, consists in spending a long evening with a family in which the daughters have a passion for poetry and the sons for punning ; or where there is a little girl, who is not only spiteful enough to sing, but barbarous enough to sing in Italian ; or a little boy, who is not only so wicked as to say his name is Norval, but so diabolical as to waylay Eliza on the wood-crowned height. Or a dinner once a month with a host who keeps a lion to exhibit periodically—the said lion delivering himself of the identical roar on each occasion, and that roar being the mere squeak of a most magnanimous mouse ;—this is an unexceptionable mode of keeping up your melancholy, and the practice is doubtless a favourite one in the society of Inconsolables. There are, moreover, fancy balls, evening parties, and musical *soirées* in abundance, most of which may be made to minister to a mind diseased in the very way in which physicians are sometimes thought to minister to the diseased body. Of course, the conversaziones of science and literature afford unfailing resources for those members of the Disconsolate Club who are liable to occasional misgivings as to their misery, and to fears lest society should contain a charm for their affliction. Such temptations may always be yielded to by the timid with a perfect reliance upon their power to extend the influence of *ennui*, and to insure a practical obedience to the mandate to “increase and multiply” in the family of the blue-devils.

Of the thousand remaining expedients another yet may be mentioned. A gentleman who feels uncom-

fortable, and desires to be inconsolable, should never fail to accept an invitation to dine in snugness with a particular friend, or with a particular friend and his particular wife. The effect in either case is likely to be the addition of a deep shade to his previous gloom. If alone with his friend, he will be pretty sure to quarrel, soon after the commencement of the third bottle, either about the bottle itself, or a mutual acquaintance, or about Lord Melbourne, or the Homeric unity. Or if a lady should be in the case, then the host and hostess will most likely take advantage of the presence of a dear friend, and esteem themselves singularly fortunate in the opportunity of getting up a quarrel between themselves, and of appealing to an affectionate but impartial judgment upon the merits of the "scene." Everybody must have observed that man and wife are seldom so apt—should we not rather say so anxious—to dispute, as when seated by the fireside in snug security with the early and intimate friend of the husband: that friend who, the lady cannot help thinking, led her lord into every species of dissipation before she knew either of them; who still keeps him out, as often as may be, very late at night; who is acquainted with secrets which she scorns to pry into, because she is utterly at a loss to discover them; and about whom she always thought there was something rather mysterious and vastly disagreeable.

It may be thought, and the probability is suggested to our minds by this very allusion to circumstances of friendly intercourse, that the Inconsolable Society has made a fatal mistake in seeking to form a club for the purpose of a general communication and confession of grievances. Every objector will bring his own experience against the project, and insist that to disclose our sorrows is to lighten them; to pour a part of

our griefs into a friend's bosom is partially to get rid of them; to tell people that we are wretched is to be far less miserable than we declare ourselves to be. This is an error, and a very vulgar one. Push the doctrine to a test, or, in modern phraseology, carry out the principle, and where does it leave you? Here:—that the man who was bowed down by sorrow when he took his morning walk, having bored with the heart-rending tale of his distresses every acquaintance whom he encountered, is perfectly upright when he sits down to dinner. Such is the wisdom of old maxims—such the charity of worldly notions of morality—that we may chatter away our griefs by chattering them into other people, relieve ourselves by racking all we meet. The society with whose philosophy our heart-broken friend has made us slightly acquainted, is not composed of such unconscionable complainants. Their doctrine is, that if you are in possession of a solid and steadfast woe, you are bound to cherish it. Get grief and keep it. Lavish not your troubles on any man whose heart will not ache to the core as it receives them. Sorrow is sacred; and what the moral philosopher of Fielding (Jonathan Wild the Great) said of mischief, may with not less truth be said of misery—it is too precious a thing to be wasted.

Another class of sceptics may urge what they would deem a fatal objection: that, in an assembly of friends, all wretched, no man could be wretched long—because, each one seeing so many shareholders of his affection completely disconsolate, must necessarily find (in accordance with the philosophy of friendship) his own affliction decrease in proportion to the extent of his survey. According to these, nothing checks one's tears like seeing the eyes of one's friends filling with water. This, also, is an error. The truth is to be found in

the very depth of the sentiment entertained by the Inconsolables; the companion-sentiment to the popular one, "the more the merrier." "The more the miserabler" is the maxim, less grammatical than grievous, of the society for the dissemination of wretchedness. We believe of course, with the philosopher, that there is something in the distresses of even our dearest friends that is far from being displeasing to us; but this can only be when we ourselves are not under the influence of a consuming sorrow. In moments of ease or of languor, it may be an agreeable excitement to hear of a banker's failure, by which one dear friend loses half a fortune—or of a footman's flight, by which another loses a daughter, or perhaps a wife; but such pleasures cannot reach us in the season of our utter wretchedness. As, in the language of Lord Bacon, a little philosophy carries us away from religion, while a greater brings us round to it; so it may be said that a small trouble or vexation carries us to a point of sympathy, while a greater brings us round again to self. The language of another illustrious ornament of our literature, the celebrated Mr. William Lackaday, may be cited in support of our doctrine—"My own distresses touches me more nearer than anybody helse's!" One pang of our own is a sort of Aaron's serpent, that swallows up those of our friends. The *bonâ fide* proprietor of those popular commodities called afflictions sore, well knows that there are times when the worst that can happen to others brings no particle of comfort to the heart. While the gout is gnawing, the sufferer is quite insensible to pleasing emotions, though you were to tell him that his wife's brother was in the gazette, or his own uncle going to be hanged.

The principle of the society is, therefore, a sound one. When we are in trouble, the trouble even of a



friend is a bore. The Inconsolables are in no danger of consolation while they assemble together. Every long visage is a full-length likeness of all the rest; and each mourner sees his own calamity staring him in the face, in a hundred directions—which is sufficiently unpleasant. Every man hears, in the multitudinous moan of the assembly, the voice of his own dolour, and his grief deepens with the groan. Nature has done much on behalf of misery; but it is the glorious province of art to double the natural poignancy of it, and add a more refined venom to the sting.

The qualification for admission into this rapidly-rising society is only defined in the general provision that the candidate must be past consolation. It will not do to look merely melancholy and gentlemanlike; the society admits of no mock-miseries. No vague misanthropy or lugubrious morbidity of disposition, is sufficient to ensure election. Neither will an actual calamity, however tragic to the party, at all times prevail. We can relate an instance. An acquaintance of the miserable wretch to whom we owe these particulars of the institution, offered himself lately as a candidate—on the ground of having unexpectedly become a widower the week before. The loss of a wife was not held to be a sufficient qualification, and the gentleman was white-balled; for the black-balls in this society are the certificates, not of rejection, but of election. It appearing afterwards, however, that a considerable annuity, which he had enjoyed in right of his wife, had ceased with her, his claim was readily reconsidered, and unanimously allowed. Among other cases our inconsolable friend mentioned that of a highly popular author, who was recently labouring under a grievous attack of *tædium vitæ*, and wished to join the Inconsolables, in consequence of the remorselessness of a literary re-



viewer, who had infamously proved him to be a block-head. The plea was not satisfactory; and the highly popular author would have been rejected, as not thoroughly undone and broken-hearted, had not the scale been suddenly turned in his favour by the fact, that his most particular and intimate friend had resolved to write a defence of him in another literary journal. This at once decided the point of qualification.

In other instances the society may seem to act with less caution, though such is not in reality the case. A young gentleman claimed to be admitted as a miserable wretch, on the score of having, in a moment of warm-hearted enthusiasm, lent a much-esteemed college chum his acceptance for an amount nearly equal to all he was worth in the world. The bill had not become due, but the gentleman was at once elected—the misery being taken for granted, and the ruin voted inevitable.

The Inconsolables have a club-room, open at all hours, the walls of which would present to the view, were there a little more light, sketches of the most celebrated prisons, hospitals, churchyards, and lunatic asylums of the country—all executed by the Messrs. Grieve.

“More doleful sight did never eye survey.”

Were you to follow two gentlemen in, after a summer-morning saunter through this melancholy metropolis, you would probably find them sinking upon a seat in a snug, silent, dreary nook, resting their wretched elbows upon the unfeeling table, and their care-worn cheeks upon their uncomfortable hands—and ordering, for purposes of refreshment, clean cambric handkerchiefs for two. You would find in the opposite corner a woe-begone personage retailing to a companion, with many sighs, all the jokes out of the new farce, with the view of throwing a fresh damp upon his spirits. Others

would be reading newspapers for the same purpose, and, judging from the countenance, with considerable success ; the parliamentary reports especially would appear to be taken with inestimable advantage to the objects of the reader. (The publications adopted by the Club as encouragers, directly or indirectly, of its purposes are numerous ; but the "N. M. M. and H." is of course excluded as eminently mischievous.)

It is a noticeable fact, that the majority of the miserales who form the society were in other days more or less famous upon town as desperate punsters, jovial blades, practical jokers, and inveterate wags. The burthen of their morning and evening song was

"Oh, there 's nothing in life can sadden us !"

The transition from the incorrigible to the inconsolable, from the sublimely droll to the ridiculously dreary, is but a step—and it is often taken. Then, seven days were too few for the week's holiday ; now, the only objection they have to the measure for making dark and doleful the seventh day is, that its beneficent provisions do not extend to the other six. But the change suits them, and they would no more be gay now than they would have been grave of old. Each lays claims to a supremacy of sorrow, and to each the pleasing couplet applies—

"If ever man to misery was born,  
'Tis *mine* to suffer, and 'tis *mine* to mourn."

Their misery is the keener, because, like treason, it has done its worst ; the cup can but overflow, and this conviction doubles the bitterness of their draught. So may they sing still, in a different sense, but with an infinitely deeper assurance of a faithful fulfilment than they had before—so may they sing still,

"Oh, there 's nothing in life *can* sadden us !"

# THE BLUNDERS OF THE REMARKABLY SKILFUL;

WITH A LITTLE PRAISE OF THE PRESS, AND A WORD  
ON BEHALF OF THE WORLD.

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IF it be true that a little learning is a dangerous thing, it follows that a little more may be a little more dangerous; and that human liability to perpetrate blunders increases in the ratio of a capability to avoid them. We want a new version of the song of "Common Sense and Genius," which is good, as far as it goes—that is, just half-way towards truth. Its accomplished author, whose lively fancy is still exercising itself in new songs, ought to bestow upon this favourite among his old ones another catastrophe, which should do justice to Common Sense as well as to Genius, by making *both* heroes of the ballad walk into the river arm-in-arm. The truth would be doubled by doubling the tragedy. The only difference between the two—their fate being the same—consists in the place where, and the manner how. Genius, scrambling up Vesuvius, for the sake of saying that he had flung a "summerset" at the top, makes a magnificent exit down the crater. Common Sense, whose circuit is bounded by Temple-bar, Oxford-street, Hyde-park-corner, and the House of Commons, on the east, north, west, and south,—crosses the Regent-circus, and, with all his eyes fixed inquiringly upon Piccadilly, is run over by an omnibus suddenly emerging from the Quadrant. Genius acquires an ague in the Hellespont; while Common Sense takes the cramp in the Serpentine. "His genius was astonishing!" we all exclaim, when a man contrives to hang by the neck a few minutes too many in a slack-

rope performance. "He was remarkable for his common sense!" is the invariable verdict, when a person achieves the distinction of setting fire to his house while reading the last "Penny Magazine" of useful knowledge in bed, with the candle rather near the curtain, on account of the small print.

Certain it is that exceeding skill is the prolific parent of exceedingly woeful failures. The newspapers "teem," all the year round, with shocking accidents and calamitous occurrences, that would seem to have no origin on earth but the uncommon caution and peculiar ability of the parties who suffer by them. If we hear of a disaster above the average scale of calamity, we are sure to hear also that the ill-starred victim to it had a natural turn for averting danger, and a particular knack at keeping on the safe side of things. If a heavy waggon come in contact with a frailer vehicle, the waggoner is sure to be on his own side of the road, and not on the shafts; and if a gentleman happen to overturn his cab, and dash it to pieces, we know that he must be a driver of no ordinary skill and experience. If we are told of a horse galloping over a few people in a crowded thoroughfare, we are sure to be informed at the same time that the rider is celebrated among his acquaintance for his equestrian accomplishments. In like manner, if a boat be run down by a craft, or carried away by the tide and upset, the feat is infallibly achieved under the auspices of somebody who had sounded all the depths and shoals of the river, and left no aquatic mystery unmastered.

Would it not seem—(we beseech the reader to lay down his Magazine for a moment, and refer to any newspaper that may be near him)—would it not seem that all the carriages which are demolished are driven by the more expert and cautious professors of the art,



and that all the boats which are lost are managed by crack watermen? From this we must necessarily conclude, either that a character for excessive prudence and ability is only to be gained through the medium of a glaring mistake, and a fearful calamity as its consequence, or else that there is no danger so great as that of committing our destinies to hands best adapted to ensure our safety and keep us out of harm's way. Indeed, we may come to both conclusions. To the last we are led by the fact, that nine-tenths of the damage we have sustained in rubs against the sharp edges of the world, we owe to nothing else than the amazing cleverness and profound experience of our pastors and masters. The prodigiously-accomplished pilot by repute, is he who in practice brings you in safety *almost* to the very shore. Cunning people are admirable hands at an *almost*. Such knowledge as theirs supersedes the necessity of watchfulness, and they consequently fall fast asleep just as they arrive in the vicinity of a sand-bank. The greater the trust in our guide, the deeper the pit we walk into. If we would come to the other conclusion, we have only to open our eyes to the truth, that the world is abundantly beneficent to error, and waits only for a due exhibition of our vices, to give us credit for a prodigious degree of virtue. A man should make a fool of himself now and then, if he would attract attention to his wisdom. The "soberest creature alive" is a creature whom nobody notices or knows anything about; but let him parody the poet's celebrated maxim about error and forgiveness, and take for his motto—

"To drink is human; to get drunk, divine;"

and the world, immediately discovering all his previous sobriety, attributes his little falling-off to a natural generosity and liveliness of disposition, acted upon by a



virtuous abhorrence of the cant of those Temperance Societies. A speculation suddenly fails. "Well, who would have guessed *that?*" cries everybody. "Such an admirable scheme!" says No. 1; "So ingenious and so original!" observes No. 2; "It was managed throughout with wonderful skill and knowledge of business!" remarks No. 3; "Especially that last movement which has so unluckily ended in ruin!" insinuates No. 4; "He is decidedly the most practical man in Europe!" asserts No. 5; "His judgment, it must be owned, is *infallible!*" pronounces No. 6. People never obtain a reputation for being infallible until they have undeniably failed; your bankrupt is worth two solvent men; he seldom wants backers when he has once fairly broken down. The road to success lies through defeat, as prophets flourish by the non-fulfilment of their predictions. To be the victim of an "unforeseen" accident is the surest way to procure a reputation for forethought. Who would think of placing implicit reliance on the construction of a safety-lamp that has not been celebrated by an explosion? Those safety-coaches that are renowned for the regularity of their upsets exactly opposite every twentieth milestone, are always inquired for with peculiar avidity by the knowing passenger. "Book me for the 'Safety' that overturned yesterday," is the demand most common among the various enterprising speculators by whom the stability of affairs is sustained. It tells the story of most of our fellow-passengers to the land's end of life.

"You talk of the world, Sir; the world is in its dotage; and yet the cosmogony——" We know what you were about to observe, Mr. Jenkinson; we do talk of the world, and however much it may have puzzled the philosophers of all ages, the said philosophers have puzzled *it* still more. Our greatest moralists have

indited the greatest libels upon its character. Commentators upon mundane matters have ever been ready enough to tell us, and we have been as apt to believe, that if a man makes but one false step—errs egregiously only once—discovers ignorance or infirmity upon a single point—the world never fails to cry out, “Just like him; we always said so; we told him how it would be!” If this were the cry our fathers heard, it has changed. It is manifest that a more generous system of injustice has come into fashion, for the good-natured world appears now to see in its votary’s grandest blunder only the signal for recognising his consummate capacity; and in his most palpable failing, the cue for acknowledging his exemplary character.

We have just said—our self-complacency must be pardoned—we have just said something that smacks of originality. We have applied an epithet where it never was applied before, by writer in verse, or writer in prose, or writers who write in neither. The term “good-natured” was never before connected with the “world,” save in the sense intended by *Sir Fretful* in his association of the phrase with friendship. Yet have we, as we hope we have partly shown, applied it justly; and we once more appeal, for the rest of our proofs, to the press. It is thought by some that there is a disposition in high quarters to take the duty off newspapers; let us hope that the duty will never be taken off editors, for it is to them and theirs that we must attribute much of the influence which has already worked this improvement in the character of the world. Yes, even with the fear—and deep and most reverential it is—of the Member for Bath before our eyes, we scruple not to attribute the more charitable and generous feeling which has already diffused itself over society, to the working of that engine of corruption; that instrument of atrocity;

that weapon of the most cowardly wickedness ; that dagger in the dark ; that black thing without a white spot upon it, the press. Yes, though it hurl stones at us, still there are sermons in them. Let us own the truth. It is in the newspaper that we find the most kindly and beneficent views of the daily calamities it records ; it is the newspaper that applies itself to bind up the wounds of society with the smallest amount of suffering and the largest degree of sympathy ; it is the newspaper that, after relating a melancholy occurrence in terms more expressive of the harrowed feelings of a friend than of a mere looker-on and chronicler, takes the wider view of justice, and vindicates humanity, by intimating that "no blame is attributable to the coachman," and that "the conductor of the steam-carriage did all he could to prevent the mischief." According to the virtuous deplorers of the iniquity of the press, the newspaper should, in these cases, gratify its insatiable malice by imputing the utmost possible blame to all parties implicated, and by holding up each separate criminal to public reprobation as "a monster in the human form."

The newspaper is more generous than its assailants. If we admit the bitterness of its censure, we must also own the sweetness of its praise ; for one drop of gall, it gives us fifty of honey. It is easy to say that it traduces public men and stabs at private character ; but you shall count up these its offences in an hour, and not find a year long enough to enumerate its voluntary laudations and spontaneous defences of mankind. Say what we will, it is in the main a peace-maker ; it is the best adjudicator we can have, for rather than condemn rashly, it acquits both parties. Do we want evidence of the fact ? every day furnishes it. We have a paragraph or two before us which we shall put into the

witness-box. The other day, a steam-packet, while chasing another, was met by a third of larger size. They struck—the concussion was tremendous—the smaller vessel was partly destroyed, and a hundred persons, thankful for the preservation of their lives, were put on shore. Here there seemed to be something really wrong; no. “It is but right,” says the account, “to state that both captains are very old conductors of steam-vessels, and are considered to be two of the most *skilful* men in the trade.” Does not this help our argument? Had these captains never come into disastrous collision, should we have ever heard of their skill? What appeared to be their misconduct, has procured them a character for ability. Two or three days after this, a similarly creditable freak occurred; a schooner coming in contact with a steamer, and certain shoulders were dislocated. What says the narrative? “No blame is attached to the captain of the schooner.” Is any imputable to the other party? no. “The captain of the steamer is a very persevering and steady man.” We quote the very words of the account; and ask, would our captain ever have been, as he now is, celebrated for steadiness, had he not played off a prank that rendered his possession of that respectable quality particularly problematical?

It would be a little curious, under these circumstances, if the world were to fail of growing considerate and merciful—even overmuch, if that be possible. At any rate, let us leave off the old-fashioned habit of assertion, that society, receiving these impressions, is unindulgent and uncharitable, and that the papers it patronises are fond of construing harshly and dealing in libel. All that is to be feared is, that, as this good-nature is the product of the small tree of knowledge which is already planted among us, the considerateness



for human error may by-and-by reach to an inconvenient pitch; as a man may be tempted to transgress for the sake of acquiring a certificate of innocence—to blunder outrageously, by way of distinguishing himself for his infallibility. We are yet in our infancy of intelligence, and, like infants, must be fed through the medium of a quill for some time longer. But the day is fast approaching when we shall no longer buy other people's papers, but write them ourselves; when every family will produce its own journal, and every man will be his own editor. Then what a rivalry will there be in the race of generosity! Society will be one virtue, and the world will be an "entire and perfect chrysolite." So may we prophesy from the fact, that every one of us can already reckon up a dozen acquaintances whom we might suppose to be really vulgar people, if the world had not decreed them to be persons of high breeding; and as many more whom we should be apt enough to mistake for dull dogs, if the world were not in raptures with their brilliant gifts and incredible accomplishments.

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### ECCENTRICITIES OF AFFECTATION.

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" 'Tis affectations, look you."—SIR HUGH EVANS.

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"ASSUME a virtue if you have it not," is *Hamlet's* recommendation to the *Queen*. It is one which, however plausible in sound, and practically admissible in particular cases, prescribes in reality the addition of the odious vice of hypocrisy to the vices in existence before. It says in other words, "Seem more virtuous by committing another gross fault."

But the advice is distinct and intelligible—we can at



least understand the policy of it, whether we approve or condemn. The adoption of it may be a piece of knavery, but it does not follow that the knavery is sheer folly—except in the sense in which all knavery is, from first to last.

Now there are assumptions and affectations which, though equally common, are not so comprehensible. Why people pretend to be virtuous; why they affect to be pious, witty, frank, and honest; why they “make-believe” to be amiable and generous; a child can understand. But it is not so easy to comprehend the principle upon which they affect to be less perfect than they really are; why they lay claim to defects which are not legally their own; why they pretend to possess weaknesses and demerits as things admirable and honourable.

“Assume a failing if you have it not,” seems the perfection of the absurd and irrational.

“Open this muffin for me, there’s a good fellow, for positively I haven’t strength—and in the mean time I’ll just flirt a little with a bit of toast.”

This was lisped out at breakfast by a hale, vigorous specimen of youthful activity, all bone and muscle, six feet high, and as strong as Hercules. Strength and Health, indeed, were his father and mother, and the son took mightily after his parents. Yet there he was, affecting the invalid, and insinuating a claim to compassion—a necessity for assistance in the opening of a muffin. With tremendous energy, and a frame that might have led one to expect, when he spoke,

“That large utterance of the early gods,”

he articulated languidly and low; pretending first to be possessed with indolence, which is a pernicious and disgraceful quality; and next to be afflicted with bodily

weakness, which is an ailment that nobody admires, though it is sometimes pitied, much to the mortification of the sufferer.

But it may be said that all this affectation is but humour and masquerade, and that the pretence of feebleness is the strong man's joke—"it was only his fun." There is not an atom of fun in the case. The good people of both sexes, who creep about occasionally, with dismal looks, and too little strength to tell you they are invalided, are incapable of a joke—they have no fun in them—they all sham in sober seriousness. Were it indeed a trick intended to be funny; a little bit of hoaxing of the very silliest kind; it might pass as all bad jests do pass, and be pardoned for its intention's sake. But again we say, the affectation is no joke.

As there are some who thus deny and cast off their own bodily graces, make rueful their good looks, and drag their limbs after them to disguise their manly activity, so are there many more who affect to be destitute of certain honourable qualities, moral and intellectual, which are their own private property.

It is reasonable enough for the hard, sour, selfish grasper to affect a touch or two of the charitable; and we can all comprehend why he who hoards every farthing, scatters his munificent sentiments about so profusely: but why should the tender-hearted and generous reliever of his poor fellow-worms in this world—the heroic struggler on behalf of the neglected, the injured, the trampled,—the kind and active sympathizer with all who are in pain, or trouble, or penury—put on the aspect of a selfish disbeliever, assume un pitying airs, affect the cynic and the tyrant, and speak in the tones of misanthropy! This masquerading is to be seen to this day; out of novels, and beyond the pale of the stage. Where is the sense, the sanity of this affectation

of the hard worldly feeling, in natures to which it is perfectly foreign, and never had a resting-place for a single moment?

The affectation of the unintellectual is as marked, as the pretended lack of moral warmth when there is a good blazing fire within. Observe, for instance, what is so frequently to be seen—that pretended indifference to the beautiful, which, if real, would denote a nature “without form, and void,” with darkness ever growing thicker upon the face of it. There are plenty of good worldly reasons, grounded upon self-interest, personal vanity, or the desire of pleasing even, for exclaiming aloud, “How beautiful!” at sight of some object of art, or some combination of the forms of nature, which nevertheless produces no corresponding emotion in the spectator. For playing the hypocrite, by affecting admiration, every hour brings with it some inducement; but is it not strange, that anybody born in a steady, respectable planet, and not in a comet, should ever have been tempted to affect an insensibility to the profound and fascinating influences of beauty!—should pretend to be so very much lower than the angels as to see nothing angelic anywhere!

Nothing is more natural than that a foolish heavy-eyed plodder among pictures should affect to fall into raptures about Raphael, and boast of a capacity to appreciate all his divine doings. But nothing surely is more unnatural than the affectation of not perceiving any thing remarkable in the Cartoons; than the affectation of a want of eye-sight, a want of interest, a want of soul, which if real would be a monstrous and most pitiable defect.

We know well enough, why, in rambles under summer-hedges and along garden-walks, the prettiest

“sentimentalities” are uttered about flowers by persons who have no real taste for those perfumed delicacies ; but we do not know so well what people mean by affecting a fine disdain, turning up their noses filled with fragrance, and protesting that “they can’t bear flowers.” Yet we witness both spectacles.

To boast of a fine sense, an exquisite perception, which has unhappily been denied to us, is in the usual order of things, and a rational lie enough : but to boast of some sad deficiency, some gross deformity and distortion, which nevertheless has no existence in us, is, by pretending to be contemptible, to become so.

To do at Rome as the English do, when they go there—see all that is to be seen—denotes, at any rate, a laudable curiosity, and a degree of interest which is rather better than the total absence of it ; but on the other hand, what a profound affectation of indifference to grandeur and beauty, of insensibility to the charm which thousands, though not sensibly touched, have yet the grace to pretend to be enslaved by, is conveyed in the answer of the elegant tourist to the inquiry—

“ Did you visit Rome ? ”

“ I think we stopped there to change horses ! ”

Equally deep and exquisite was the affectation of a certain scholar, learned in all languages, who was for the space of a minute in some doubt whether he had ever read a tragedy, entitled “ Macbeth.”

“ Yes, I think I did read it once—I believe I considered its merits to be over-estimated. Yes, I remember it now very well.”

This pretence to a bad memory ranks of course, under some circumstances, among the more reasonable make-believes ; it may be convenient to forget ; but it must be included in our category of absurdities, because



practised often when it would be more rational to remember. Somebody is questioned about an affair familiar to him as his name—he can recollect nothing—it is all a blank. He thinks it looks large-minded to forget, and assures you with a simper that he has a shocking memory.

Charles Lamb, in one of his admirable letters to Manning when in China, supposes his friend's memory to be weakened by distance; and accordingly, to the information that "So-and-so is gone to France," adds, "*You remember France?*" Some people would have face enough to affect to forget it, if they fancied this would add to the dignity of their littleness, or render their ignorance more impressive.

Another specimen of these anomalous and many-headed affectations, in which the utmost inconsistency is manifested, is to be met with in every family, however select—or shall we say every family, almost?—the reader's is the exception.

It consists in affecting to be a little younger than the parish-register proclaims us to be; so that, in order doubtless to signalise our admission into the church, a miracle has been worked in each of our particular cases, by introducing the ceremony of christening long prior to the ceremony of birth.

The number of years struck off the register varies of course with the exigencies of circumstance and the elasticity of conscience; but even *one* year is something, and the "forty-four" folks think they act handsomely, and in a spirit of martyrdom to truth, if they acknowledge to "forty-three." The trifle of time is really *very* trifling, but they cannot bear to be exact.

Now, if there be any advantage in wandering either way from the fact, it should exist on the side of age.



To call ourselves sixty at fifty-two is to obtain renown for good looks, to be rated higher in the scale of respect, and accounted deeper in the knowledge of books and men. On the other hand, to understate the age, is to be thought looking "very old for your years," and a victim to early dissipation and unbridled passions.

Assuredly the affectation, on this side, can elevate us not an inch in any human being's estimation. And yet this it is which is continually practised. People pretend to be just a year or so younger, as though they fancied they should thus live a year or so longer. When the deception has some specific object, some particular victim in view, it has some obvious use, and the falsehood is simply disgraceful; but where it is general, and the fruit of a foolish affectation, it is still disgraceful, as all falsehood is: with this addition, that it is pre-eminently useless, ridiculous, and vain.

As there is an affectation of coldness and indifference, so there is one of enthusiasm; which, though we may grant it to be less objectionable, is equally inconsistent, because it includes in its vast sympathy all conceivable objects, employing the same words to describe the high and low, and lavishing the same fervour on the insignificant and the sublime. Thus when a lady, throwing her large handsome eyes up to heaven, and resting her clasped hands upon her lap, exclaims, with more intensity than becomes the occasion—

"Oh, I have such a passion for roast-pig!"

Or when a little affected miss thinks it quite fine and grand to be emphatic, and affects to break out into poetry with—

"Oh! Camilla, do you not admire pale green ribband? I must say I *am* fond of pale green ribband—I *could* live upon it!"

When these little oddities catch one's eyes and ears, of course we know that the affectation-principle is at high-pressure.\*

There are several forms of that remarkable affectation which exhibits a partiality for personal defects, and flourishes on the strength of weaknesses which are visionary. One form affects the eyesight—a short-sighted affectation.

“A lover's eye can gaze an eagle blind,”

sings the poet ; but the lover of prose, when he beholds his mistress, raises his glass to his eye, affecting an inconvenient brevity of vision, and achieving at the same time an inelegant screw of the features. That the short-sighted should pretend to see things distant, is easily accounted for ; but it does appear inexplicable that any one who is blessed with perfect sight should affect a slight deficiency in that respect, and apply so actively the needless ornament pendent at the neck.

Another form affects the speech, and another the gait. “God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another,” says *Hamlet*.

The affectation of false roses and sham lilies is intelligible—we see the object—it is to complete what Nature has left imperfect, to heighten her handiwork after her own immaculate pattern. There is nothing

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\* The following describes an affectation which, though common and ridiculous enough, does not belong to the inconsistent and contradictory class which it is our present purpose to discuss :

YOUNG LADY. Oh, mama, I'm so sorry, William says his tortoise is as dead as mutton !

MAMA. Hush, my dear, hush ! What a vulgar phrase to repeat ! never let me hear you mention mutton in that manner.

YOUNG LADY (*after a pause employed in considering the points of gentility*). Mama, might I have said with more propriety, “as dead as venison ?”

MAMA. Why, my dear, that would undoubtedly have been better, and I don't know that there could be the least objection to the expression.

incongruous in this, except the bad taste and folly of attempting to graft the artificial upon the natural.

But *Hamlet* goes on to describe a reasonless and most ridiculous order of affectation.

"You lisp," he says, "you amble—" and do you not, to this hour? All the rest of his charge is comprehensible, but this is not. Why lisp? To pretend to have a defective utterance, as though there were a musical charm in it, seems too gross and preposterous a fancy to have been popular among the affected for centuries! Again, why amble? Are the mincing gait, the studied shuffle, the decided limp, which are practised and performed so assiduously, superior to the easy and graceful walk which is abandoned for them? Have they anything to do with the poetry of motion?

We shall be warned that some of the eccentricities of affectation at which we have glanced are very rarely to be seen or heard. It is enough for us that they exist, or have existed: being so absurd and unnatural, as to be at least as wonderful as they are rare.

Among the minor ones is the affectation of writing a most slovenly and illegible hand—a scrawl too wild and tangled to be interpreted by any but the long familiarized and incurably friendly. If a style too obscure to be deciphered, even by the writer, were achieved, still we should see no vast merit in it. It has never been written down anywhere that pothooks-run-mad constitute an elegant and useful accomplishment. Yet people, here and there, scribble as though they thought so, affect to be totally unable to shape a single letter decently, and are very fond of remarking with a pretty little self-satisfied giggle, that "they really do write a wretched hand."

There existed for a considerable time a rather formid-

able affected conspiracy against correct spelling ; but this is now almost rooted even out of the boarding-schools.

There is one form of affectation which should not be left out of the list. As many who can walk well affect a limp, and some who can see clearly pretend to enjoy a necessity for a glass, and a few who in robust health assume an interesting ailment,—so there are numbers who, while much given to vocalism, profess to be totally unable to sing. There is such a thing, strange as it may seem and is, as the affectation of not showing off. The reputation for a given faculty is sometimes best kept up by never exercising the given faculty itself. Persons of this order are always asked to sing, and never do. One is always hearing their voices, protesting that they have no voice. But it must be admitted that the affectation of singing is sometimes almost as annoying, though certainly not so inexcusable.

There is one thing stranger than all this ; one example of the perverse and anomalous in affectation, which excels the rest in absurdity. It is to be observed in the few—the few only by comparison, in number the many—who affect vices of which they are innocent.

How shocked we are to see men professing sternness when they are soft and compassionate, affecting pride and reserve when they are inwardly communicative and humble-minded ; but the folly can go no further, when it fastens upon a low vice, and fictitiously adopts the baseness which decency would disown. If we were to catch some eccentric in the act, not of mounting a decent though deceptive wig but of shaving his head and affecting baldness, it would not seem more strange than to hear him boasting of nights of intoxication which were spent soberly, and pretending to be the



triumphant emptier of bottles whereof the corks were never drawn.

Worse still, a thousand times, is the abominable affectation of another kind of profligacy, which is not only fatal to the character of him who stoops to it, but perilous to the reputation perhaps of innocent women. The mere mock man of virtue, and the pretender to temperance, we pass by; but we carefully note down the name of the sham rake and lady-killer—of him who assumes the air of a successful wooer, and gaily affects the vice, of which, if guilty, he should be at least ashamed. The most despicable and wretched of the whole tribe of the affected is this mean little dabbler in the small-talk of gallantry, who likes to be thought licentious, and affects to be “a devil of a fellow.”

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#### SPEECHMAKING AFTER DINNER.

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THE male moiety of the community is composed of two sets of intolerable bores—those who can't make speeches after dinner, and those who can.

The first of the two classes is a vastly miscellaneous one. It comprises the cleverest fellows that ever starved, and the dullest dunces that ever fared sumptuously every day. Wisdom and stupidity, originality and commonplace, here meet on a level. Everything, as they say, is in position, and truly position is everything in this matter. Let but commonplace and originality, incapacity and genius, keep their seats at table and give their legs a holiday, and you shall see a difference between them as broad as the distinction between the finest turtle, and what the cookery-books call “mock-



mutton broth." They have no more resemblance to each other while so seated—they have no more in common—than Shakspeare and his critics, or the Opera and the English Opera. But only let the dunce and the genius be called upon to rise—to propose a toast, or to return thanks. Let them both get upon their legs. See them once fairly brought to a standstill, in a small, sober, silenced, listening, assembly, with the eyes of that little Europe upon them, and all its long ears open—and then say, "Handy, dandy, which is the justice, and which is the thief." Decide between the genius and the dunce. Choose your Dromio—they are both alike.

Of the two, perhaps your particularly stupid fellow cuts the best figure. He's a confirmed blockhead; he half suspects it himself, and everybody else knows it. He has nothing to say, and he says it as sheepishly as he can. He has dined gloriously, as he fancies, but that's a mistake; he has merely got rid of his appetite, which is a very different thing from dining. He can eat, for he is an animal; but how should such a soul as his ever know how to dine. He drank, too, in his way, at dinner—drinking (divine art!) being a matter in which the idiot is always sure that he is profound; in short he has just gulped down so many glasses of wine, and that passes with him for drinking. Now, is this a goose to bestow upon the mute and expecting company even a cackle of a first-rate character? The donkey does not know even his mother tongue, and his very bray is a failure. Accordingly he tells them six times over, that he is no speaker, though no assertion ever stood in less need of repetition; stammers out two or three practical and most convincing illustrations of the fact; mumbles something about the will and the deed; and sits down considerably less than Nobody.

But your Great Intellect, who gets up next, the Somebody of the party! Well, the no-mistake principle applies to him; he is Master Sure-card. Perhaps he is not a man of first-rate genius, perhaps he is; clever, accomplished, self-possessed, at all events; born with brains, and bred up among books; plenty to say for himself, and therefore, *of course*, able to say it. We shall hear—and see too. During dinner, how pleasantly has he chimed in with all that was pleasant, audibly. We are sitting three or four chairs away from him, but we have caught his voice a dozen times, though not a thought louder than it ought to be, breaking in lively notes through the general chat, and obtaining for itself gradually the unsought, but silent attention of the party—drawn to the short smart anecdote he was relating, or the acute and graceful remark, which, though addressed by him to his opposite neighbour only, had insensibly seduced all to listen. The consciousness of the silence amidst which he finds himself speaking does not embarrass him—he speaks to all, if all indicate a wish to hear. He is quite at ease, and makes others feel so. There is a fluency about his chitchat that bespeaks a man little likely to be at a loss for words, or in danger of creating awkward pauses in conversation. He is just the person to talk well, even when there is no subject to converse upon. He can make his theme, you would say, quite as easily as he can manage it. But hush! he rises to speak; he has something to propose; is he going to return thanks? Hush! *he is on his legs!*

He might as well be on his head! But *has* he a head? Has that shy, sheepish, stammering—But let us not anticipate. Give him time. Fair play is the great English principle. Meanwhile, contemplate, look at the object before you—

"See, what a grace is seated on this brow ;  
Hyperion curls, the front of Jove himself !"

*Job* would be more germane to the matter, for he is a terrible time before he begins, and should teach us patience. Action has its eloquence, doubtless—but the ear must be fed too. At present he is the most exclusively pantomimic orator I ever heard—*saw*. He has not the *vox*, though the *præterea nihil* may be indisputable. But hush again ! He commences—he has actually articulated, "Mr. Chairman." "And Gentlemen," will develop itself at its leisure. Hush—

"When he speaks,  
The air, a chartered libertine, is still,  
And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears  
To steal his sweet and honied sentences."

Wonderful indeed were the thief that stole a sentence of his. Did ever breath give utterance to such a set of dislocated syllables ? Every word in succession seems ashamed of its company, if, indeed, it can be said to have companions when the distance between each is so great. A speech, we are told, should come trippingly from the tongue ; but this—it sneaks into existence. It is born bit by bit. You only get a sentence by instalments ; and when by a laborious effort of memory you have collected the various parts, and fitted them together, you discover that he has omitted the meaning. Verily the gentleman may have some genius ; but nine-tenths of it consist purely in the power of concealing the remaining portion of it. Imagine that he is really trying to be intensely stupid ; that he is assuming the *ignoramus* ; and then you will perceive at once that his speech is prodigiously clever and eminently artistical. But only conceive him to be labouring to express his thoughts ; to present the image of reason to the minds of others ; to appear the reflecting, accomplished, and

intellectual creature that he actually is; and then consider, were ever means so ill-adapted to the end—so sure rather of producing a contrary result! What an unaccountable perversion; what an inexplicable abuse of the gift of speech; what a mad freak, that sanity should wish to appear in disguise! There is no limit to human folly, but all folly is supposed to have a motive of some sort. A man may be silly enough to put peas into his boots, but surely not with a view of throwing grace into his steps; or he may pay his tailor regularly, but not with the hope of ranking among fashionable people. But for the folly before us, there seems to be no motive. Why the man's articulation was admirable just now—his conversation ran on as glibly, as though he were speaking

“In dapper couplets like Gay's fables;”

whereas, at this very moment, he is pretending to have an impediment in his speech. His talk was in a strain like that of the brothers in the old play, “far above singing;” and now it is neither song nor sermon. That he is the pleasantest of fellows he has convinced you; and he is now trying to establish a conviction that he's an incurable dolt, and an abominable bore. Can it be the same person? Philip drunk and Philip sober, we can identify as the same; but we can recognise no feature here corresponding with the character seen but now. Is there a transformation so wonderful depending upon the question, whether you speak sitting or standing? Has the head such an antipathy to the feet that it won't act in concert with them?

The Incapables are, as we have said, a very miscellaneous class, and the circumstances under which they exhibit their incapacity are manifold. There are three distinct sets of them; those who are suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to do oratorical duty after



dinner; those who anticipate the call, and come with malice aforethought, and with fraudulent intentions, to pass off a written essay for a speech; and those, the volunteers and intruders, who are smitten with a love of speechmaking, who are certain that Nature meant them for first-class orators, and who tell you to your teeth that they are Ci—Ci—Ciceros and Ch—Cha—Chathams to a m—m—man. Because the greatest of orators stuttered, they are convinced that they can speak most eloquently, if people would only take something to cure their coughs.

The first of these three sets comprises the only after-dinner speechmakers, who ever excited in me one emotion akin to mercy. They are usually brought upon their legs by some mark of respect, and are, therefore, objects of compassion. As they have been deemed worthy of a tribute of honour, one pities them. Theirs is rather a hard case, certainly. They came out to be comfortable; they are unanimously selected as meriting a compliment; they have the esteem and praises of the whole table, and they are consequently put to the torture. Watch a modest man of this class undergoing “all the honours,” as per order from the chair. He was in excellent spirits before you drank his health; he never felt better in his life than when unconscious of your concern about him; he wanted nothing on earth until he found himself in possession of your good wishes; but now he is miserable to the finger-tips. Observe how they just tremulously touch the table when he has risen to fulfil the grateful duty of stretching himself upon the rack. Listen—no, you can’t catch his voice yet, but you may hear his knees knock together. He is a bold, brave fellow, and no fool either, is this shivering Incapable. He is a dashing politician, and thrusts a sharp pen, six times a week, clean through a dozen

tolerably eloquent Members of Parliament. He has drowned a few oratorical Peers in his inkstand. But look at him now! He can't say "Bo" to the chairman. He hasn't a word to throw at the dog that proposed his health. He lacks power to express his grateful sense of the horrible dilemma you have placed him in. His full clear voice is thick and low, his command of language is reduced to a few of the most hacknied and commonplace phrases, and even these he uses without the least pretensions to grace. What confusion and havoc does this penalty make in a man's mind! One of the most sensible and judicious persons alive, but one of the least "accustomed to public speaking," being obliged to address a small company, all associates, on some Shakspearian subject; no less, in fact, than "the memory of Shakspeare," which was the toast he had to propose; actually, in his nervousness and confusion, introduced the poet as one "whose name he was sure, must be known to *every gentleman present*." There's fame! There were almost twenty people present, and most of them must have been authors.

The second division, the fraudulent speechifiers who come prepared with a "spontaneous burst of eloquence," the result of written essays got by heart, one would abhor with more intensity, if they did not so cruelly punish themselves while inflicting punishment on us. Our comfort always is, that they have had no enjoyment of their dinner. The premeditated speech has stuck in their throats the whole time, more tormentingly than a fishbone. Ten chances to one but a bit of it comes out accidentally, which you identify after dinner, when reproduced in its right place.

If you sit next to one of this class, you must address him twice before you get the ordinary reply. If you ask him for the salt, he is thinking about something

totally different in its nature—the speech. When the moment comes (this is our revenge and consolation) he can't recollect it. He has run it over in his mind once too often. He has spouted it over each course at dinner, and glanced at the heads of it over the dessert. And now the “glory that was once so bright” is dim, dull, all but imperceptible. He can't for his life remember two consecutive sentences of the speech. He has caught his Phoenix just as it was on the wing to go off—that's lucky! and he has planted his Upas-tree securely—that's glorious! he can also recollect his favourite quotation, but imperfectly—he is satisfied that it is to this effect:—

“That angels seldom call and don't stay long.”

But unluckily no trace of what should introduce and connect these essential flourishes lingers in the memory; he has some of his pearls left, but he has no string, and they are all but useless. What adds to the perplexity, the lost speech is an insurmountable obstacle to the formation of another; he can't think of something else to say, for his mind will endeavour to recall what it had learnt. At last, after a few straggling phrases, forming altogether a most disjointed and spasmodic sentence, you hear him going on:

“And this I may say, gentlemen,—that is, I may, perhaps, be allowed to observe—to remark, rather, as remarkably expressive of—to *observe*, I would say, as remarkably expressive of my feelings on this occ—on the present occasion—that this, gentlemen—that I consider this—I'm sure I need not say—and I say it without hesitation—that this is the proudest moment of my life. (*Pause.*) For as the fabled bird of poetry, the maiden Phoenix of our immortal bard, derives renewed vitality from the ashes of, if I may be allowed

the expression, an expired and extinct existence, so does the calm serenity of age emanate from the transitory turbulence of youth. (*Pause.*) And, gentlemen—gentlemen, I'm quite sure I need not add—need not add, on the present occasion—what I'm quite sure you will readily believe, that my feelings are naturally on the present occasion—that those feelings, I say, may be conceived, or even imagined, but they can neither be described, nor—nor—depicted. (*Pause.*) For like the poisonous Upas, whose deadly and devastating," &c. Fluent for two minutes and a half.

The third division of the Incapables is composed of those inveterate declaimers who are never easy but when they are on their legs—though they can't go on ten seconds together; they must be able to make speeches, they think, for it is notorious that they could never do anything else. This is no conclusive argument, we know; but then they don't like conclusive arguments. Their arguments have no conclusions—no middles—no beginnings. They haven't the merit even of "blundering round about a meaning." Speaking is one thing—speechifying is another; now these people can't even speechify; they go on for half an hour without getting a sentence further—repeating their substantives, recalling their adjectives—substituting this phrase for that, until they come to a dead-lock in a parenthesis; when down they sit, wondering what impression their eloquence has made, to restore drooping nature by means of oratory's best companion, an orange—and to watch for an opportunity of getting up again. But these pleasant fellows are not conceited; oh, no! they are merely in error—rather in error, as to their estimate of the essential qualities of oratory. They are not vain; only they do wish that they had been induced to enter Parliament early in life; and they can't help



wondering sometimes, what effect their peculiar style of speaking might produce in the House. They may be wrong; but they think now Canning's gone!—they don't know!

But patience is exhausted. Let us turn to the other half of the dining community—the culprits that CAN speak.

There may be differences of opinion as to the evils occasioned by the pretenders whom we have just sketched; to some people the torture may be more tolerable than it is to me. I once knew a sane man who had a taste for going to see young gentlemen make their first appearance on any stage in the character of *Douglas*. He might have fancied these convulsions after dinner. But about the notorious offenders whom I am now to introduce, there can only be a universal concurrence of sentiment. They are bores of the first magnitude—regular Thames-tunnellers. They will talk—"ye gods, how they will talk!"

The question whether a good speech or a bad speech has been delivered, need scarcely be put; the objection at the outset being, it *is* a speech. The composition of a certain fish-sauce is justified by an ingenious friend of ours, on the ground that it is made only of "the *best* black beetles." The sauce and the speech may admit of the same vindication, and then remain as objectionable as before. The speech is liable to condemnation on seventeen separate grounds; the first count of the indictment against it is, that it stops the claret. After this we may abandon the other sixteen; our case is proved. But the man who delivers it, who has kept us waiting twenty minutes with a dry glass, what consummate effrontery! And what measureless conceit, what unfathomable ignorance of human nature, to suppose that we deem it pleasanter to listen to his

voice than to our own. But above all, what ingratitude! We have just drunk the monster's health (to be sure the wine's particularly good) in a bumper; and the advantage he takes of this, is identical with that taken by the frozen adder. Envidable adder after all—for adders are deaf! He makes us speedily retract our courteous wishes for his very, perhaps jolly, good health; and we inwardly substitute for them a fervent prayer to be evermore preserved from the inflictions of my Lord Tongue. It is all very well to point to the stop-watch when he has sat down, and show that the speech was after all only five-and-thirty minutes long; if the time seemed three weeks to me, three weeks it was. But, without exaggeration, it seemed half a century. I felt that I had grown gray, and only wondered how the company had contrived to shave invisibly. And the orator sat down, doubtless imbued with a happy consciousness that he had established his own importance—that the length of his speech proved him to be a person of some standing in society, as its heaviness showed he was a gentleman of no ordinary weight!

A common specimen of the Can-Speak tribe, is the gentleman who having watched, very uneasily, the course of a particularly brisk and interesting conversation for two or three hours, despairs of an opportunity dropping in his way, and rises with marked diffidence to beseech pardon from "our excellent host," if for one minute—one moment only—he ventured just to presume to propose a single toast. After a few flourishes, expressive of his deep regret that the task should have devolved upon him, and of his conviction that every one of his hearers is incalculably more competent to render justice to it than he is—in fact, that he has no qualification for such a task (why did he voluntarily and

intrusively undertake it?)—no qualification except his profound sense of the eminent worth that presides so hospitably over the table;—After this, which seldom occupies more than ten minutes, he begins; perhaps with an allusion to something that Seneca has observed, or to something else that took place in the middle ages; he then fixes his view for a short time upon West-Indian affairs—details to the company his impressions on the subject of phrenology—intimates that he is yet unconvinced by the arguments in favour of Le Sage's claim to the authorship of *Gil Blas*—doubts whether the north-west passage will ever be effected, and explains why—dwells for a few minutes on the currency question, and descants liberally upon corn—reverts to Macready's *Hamlet*, and proves that his *Oliver Cromwell*, had he ever played that character, would have been still better—settles upon a dozen other and equally pertinent subjects in succession—examines at due length the question, whether muffins or crumpets are preferable in a digestive sense—and winds up by observing, that although he is totally unable to expatiate with any effect upon these grave topics he feels sure that he need offer no apology in that company for proposing to them the “health of their respected and admirable host.”

What a pity it is that improper language is not proper language! Phrases fit for a magazine are all unfitted to convey an idea of the indignation with which such an after-dinner orator must inspire the most patient and unresenting nature. It is impossible to say what we think of him in print.

Among the other species, he is most to be avoided, who takes his flight without a subject of any sort to set bounds to his discursiveness; who has the faculty of saying an infinite deal of nothing, upon nothing.

He opens with an humble acknowledgment, that after the brilliant speeches to which he has been a delighted listener, it would be presumptuous in him to dream of interesting his audience—and then off he goes. Sheer want of breath can alone check his career, even momentarily. Mysterious are the laws that govern the human mind, but more mysterious is the mind that is governed by no laws at all. Such is the mind of our expatiater upon flowers and stars, and divine emotions and humanizing influences; on power, glory, beauty, love, and genius; on revivifying gladness and ecstatic sorrow; on every thing that is and is not; and on all that amounts to the opposite of something. These spoiled children of eloquence have a theory that sound and sense, too, are not necessary to a splendid speech: they are convinced that speaking and thinking at the same time is a sad waste of the human faculty. They consistently act upon their theoretic principle; they harangue, two hours together, in a manner remarkably independent of thought, and if they ever think, it must be when they are silent. As they use no phrases but very fine ones, their language is assumed to be eloquent; as Brummel might have been taken for a Cræsus in virtue of his profound unconsciousness of “change for a shilling.” Because they are always speaking, they fancy that they must be speakers: it would be as reasonable to contend that a man who always walks to his club, must be club-footed.

The science of dining will never be perfectly understood, or rendered so conducive as it might be to the happiness and ends of society, until it has been made to comprise all the after-arrangements which are now left for chance or caprice to settle. Then, a man will no more be allowed to make speeches over his wine than over his venison, and he would just as soon think



of eating the health of every man at table as of drinking it. Imagine the absurdity of pledging the chairman in calipash; or rising, spoon in hand, to propose a friend's health in a bumper of green peas!

Those whose miserable fate it has been to move much among orators, must, in the intensity of their unmerited affliction, carry their objections to speechifying still further. For my own part, I am clearly of opinion, with my Lord B., that "practised oratory" is a "worthless accomplishment," and that he is the most eloquent man in company who most nearly resembles Fielding's venerated Parson Supple: a gentleman who was remarkable for his taciturnity at table, though his mouth was never shut at it. But the accomplishment is worse than worthless. Never, I am convinced, will our beloved country flourish as it ought to do, until speechmaking is abolished by act of parliament. Tongues once set going, never stand still while their owners are able to stand. As long speeches require ears to match, it should be a sign of wisdom not to listen. Let those who speak, hear too. Every Orator his own Audience. That's reasonable.

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### KEEPING SECRETS.

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"Break, my heart, for I must *hold my tongue*."—SHAKSPEARE.

CHARLES GLIB has one peculiarity that distinguishes him from every other bustling chattering inhabitant of this blabbing world. In the course of a pretty long life he has never been known to reveal a single secret—for nobody ever trusted him with one.

He is the very opposite of that celebrated lover of taciturnity, who having walked twenty miles with an

equally silent companion, not a syllable having escaped the lips of either, exclaimed, in acknowledgment of his friend's observation, on arriving at a cross-road, that the left would be the best path to take,—

“Heavens ! what a talkative fellow you are !”

Glib is, to an equal degree, a lover of loquacity. The sound of his own voice is to him the music of the spheres. Other people have their fits of sullenness and reserve—he never has. Other people pause to take breath, which he never does. Other people like to chatter away only on their favourite themes ; their own rheumatics, or their neighbour's extravagance ; but no topic ever came amiss to Charley Glib. *He* never sinks into taciturnity, merely because he happens to have exhausted all the scandal of the neighbourhood, and trumpeted his own perfections of mind and body in fifty different keys. Such silence is simply the natural consequence of over-talking, to which ordinary folks are liable ; but as for Glib, he still goes on, still finds something to say, even when he has torn his grandmother's reputation to tatters, and related the history, with all the minutest particulars, of his last cold in the head. While there are words to be uttered, a subject is never wanting. The words bring the thoughts, or he talks without them. He is nothing if not loquacious ; he associates death with silence. To talk is to enjoy. The original bird of paradise was, in his judgment, the Talking bird, and should be so described by every ornithologist.

As there is good in everything, there is convenience in this clack, for it puts us on our guard, and warns us to keep our secrets to ourselves. One would as soon think of pouring wine into a sieve, as of intrusting precious tidings to his keeping. Whatever is published at Charing-cross, or advertised in the morning papers, there can be no harm in communicating to Glib ; but

for anything of a more confidential character, it would be just as wise to whisper it to the four winds of heaven.

A secret indeed is a pearl which it were egregious folly to cast before such an animal. Secrets are utterly wasted upon your great, loud, constant, unthinking talkers. They are delicacies never truly relished by people of large appetites for speech, who can utter anything, and who fare sumptuously on immense heaps of stale news of the coarsest nature. Their palates are vitiated by vast indulgence, and their ravenous hunger, after the joys of holding forth, forbids the possibility of a keen fine taste, the nice and exquisite relish of an original secret. If they can but relate to you something particularly well known about Martin Luther or Queen Elizabeth, provided there is enough of it to ensure them a full meal, they are as contented and as happy as though they had a hundred dainty little secrets to disclose, every one of them profound, startling, and hitherto close kept. Yorick gave the ass a macaroon, but we do not find that the experiment succeeded much; the beast would no doubt have preferred thistles.

No, no; a secret is delicious food for the man of a sly, quiet, seemingly reserved turn of mind, who does not talk much, but speaks to the purpose; who has no overweening fondness for the sound of his own voice, but who fervently loves a breach of confidence; who feels that pleasures are a thousand times sweeter for being stolen; and who, while quietly disclosing some important and interesting fact of which, with many injunctions to keep it ever under lock and key, he had been the depository, is not only sensible of a relief in freeing the mind from its secret burden, but conscious of a superadded charm, the pleasure of betraying a verbal trust.

Just such a man is he who now passes my window, Peter Still. He is well-known to half the town, although his voice was never heard by any two people in it at the same time. He has whispered in the ears of a vast mob, taking each individual separately; and he has made a large portion of London his especial confidant, by catching the people who compose it, each by his button, at some season or other, and committing a precious secret exclusively to his care.

Every one of that great talking multitude looks upon himself as the sole-selected sharer of the secrets which Peter Still once held solitary in his own bosom; and each is furthermore convinced, that for caution, closeness, trustworthiness—the power of keeping a thing entirely to himself until the proper moment arrives for discreetly whispering it to a valued friend—Peter Still has not his fellow either in the parish of St. Giles or St. James, nor in any parish between the celebrated two which mark the wide extremes of the metropolis.

And to look at Peter, to observe his manner, to hear him talk, you would decide that all the town was individually right; however the mob of confidants, on comparing their means of judging one with the other, might collectively pronounce a different verdict. His appearance begets an impression that the rack would have no power to unseal his lips, and wring from him the important secret you had confided to him some time before: how Miss Jane in her vexation had written a smart copy of verses on Mr. Wimple's nuptials, or how your wife had promised to favour you with a ninth heir to your books and teaspoons. No, these deep and awful secrets, once whispered in that close man's ear, must, you would swear, lie buried there for ever. Though faithful to the Catholic church, he would die unshriven rather than confess them to his priest—so



say appearances. And yet, really and truly, when you have published the two events alluded to in the close ear of Peter Still, you may as well, as far as publicity is concerned, send the verses on Mr. W.'s nuptials to be printed, addressed to the Editor of the *New Monthly*; and—having the pen still at your finger's end—draw up the form of an advertisement, in readiness, to appear hereafter properly filled up among the births in the morning paper—

“On the —th instant, in ——— street, the lady of ———, of a ———.”

Peter Still's various powers commence with the faculty of attracting people to confide in him. You look in his face, and unbosom. His seems no sieve-like nature, and to it you intrust your most delicate secrets, convinced that they will never run through. He never asks for your confidence; he never seeks to worm himself into your faith and esteem; but he quietly wins you to speak out, and communicate to him what was only known to yourself.

If you hesitate, and say, “Perhaps after all, the matter had better never be mentioned—no, not even to you!” he calmly agrees, and advises you to confine the secret to your own breast, where it is sure to be safe; well knowing that a man who meditates the disclosure of a secret can have no spur like a dissuader, and that he will immediately after tell you every word.

Nobody would suppose that beneath his most placid, passionless demeanour, an agony of curiosity was raging—that amidst so much dignified composure, he was actually dying to hear your story; as little could it be imagined when he presses your hand at parting, with your solemn secret locked up in his soul, never to be revealed even in a whisper to himself, that he is dying to disclose it to the first babbler he may meet.

But although, like *Hamlet's*, his heart would break if he were condemned to hold his tongue; although he *must* unfold the delicious but intolerable mystery, the faithful keeping of which would drive him mad; yet he never falls to a rash promiscuous chattering upon the subject—he is not open-mouthed when he meets you—he never volunteers the prohibited statement without a why or wherefore. The breach is never effected in this way—

“Well, I declare this meeting is fortunate. You must know I called at the Cottage yesterday, and there I heard—no, I never was so astonished! Our friend, the farmer, told me of it in the strictest confidence—the very strictest—such a secret!”

“*Did he? What is it?*”

“Why, then, you must know—”

And out comes all the story—not with many additions, perhaps, on this occasion, as it is only one day old.

This is the common style of the common world; where the “*What is it?*” as naturally follows the mention of a secret told in the strictest confidence, as extensive publicity follows the first dishonourable disclosure. But this is not the style of Peter Still. He never loses sight of form and ceremony; never enlightens an inquirer on such easy terms. Though more anxious to tell you than you can be to hear, he dallies and procrastinates. Though burning to accomplish the revelation, he seems ice. He compresses his lips, and drops his eyelids, shakes his head very slowly, and is tremendously emphatic with his forefinger, which always seems to point a moral when he is most violating morality.

At last, when the mixture of mysterious signs, unintelligible sounds, and stray syllables, are duly mingled,

the charm begins to work, and the secret bubbles up. Depend upon it, he makes much of it. His secrets are secrets. Impressed and edified you cannot fail to be, whatever may be the disclosure. Perhaps it may be a thing of very trifling import; that Q. is going to give up his town-house; that X., unknown to X.'s wife, has a nice little flaxen-haired boy at school near Turnham-Green; that Z., or some other letter of the social alphabet, intends to pay his debts;—no matter for the intelligence, it oozes from Peter Still as though it were

“ dear as the ruddy drops  
That visit his sad heart.”

Every word is a nail driven into your memory to fasten the fact there; and, although he had only told you in his impressive way, and with a painful sense of moral responsibility, that *two* sheriffs will certainly be chosen in Guildhall next year, yet you are satisfied for a time that he has surrendered a secret worth knowing.

But whatever he may choose to reveal, he is sure to leave you with the impression—this is invariable—that he has concealed more than he has discovered. Having told all, and a little besides, he stops short—and desires you to excuse him. When, perchance, he has related in all its particulars the very secret that you could have told him; and when he has found this out; he makes a sudden pause, puts on a much-meaning look, and regrets that the *rest* is incommunicable—a something which he dares not disclose.

And above all, does Peter Still preserve the spirit of secrecy, in constantly enjoining, with a solemnity befitting his character, every erring mortal, in whose ear he whispers a bit of forbidden news, never for his life to divulge it. What he has acquired gravely and anxiously, he never parts with lightly. He may tell the secret to

fifty persons in a day—but then he tells it only to the discreet—and each one registers the vow of secrecy before he is intrusted with the treasure ; so that when Peter has informed five hundred, he feels that he has informed but one.

No man was ever more sincere than Peter Still is, in delivering these injunctions and admonitions. When he beseeches you not to tell again—when he implores you to keep a Chubb's patent on your lips—be sure that he is in earnest ; for a secret diffused all over the town is a secret gone, and when everybody can reveal it to everybody else, why it follows that there is nobody left for him to betray it to exclusively.

He accepts a secret as he accepts a bill of exchange, deeming it of greatest use when put into circulation ; but he does not wish it to go quite out of date, before he says, "Don't let it go any further." He is like those poets who print their verses to circulate amongst friends—who publish privately ; so Peter publishes his secrets.

Who could possibly suppose that such an impersonation of the Prudential and the Discreet as Peter seems—a creature so calm, close, cautious—so thoroughly safe, so every-way to be relied on—was as hollow as a fife, which cannot be intrusted with a little of one's breath without speaking. The secret which we cannot confide to the talkative, we often repose with greater peril in the reserved.

Charley Glib walks and chatters about town, labelled "Dangerous," to warn off every unwary whisperer of tidings not intended for the public ear ; but Peter Still appears, of all vehicles for the carrying of secrets, the "patent safety," and we intrust life and limb to him. With Loquacity we run no risk—with Reserve we are ruined. Confiding in Glib, we know that we cast our



secret upon the stream, and it is borne away upon the first flowing tide of words into the wide ocean of babble, where it is lost in an overwhelming din, which nobody listens to; confiding in Peter Still, we equally cast our secret upon the stream, whence it is conveyed through innumerable water-pipes, intersecting every quarter of the town, and is laid on at every house.

The most sly and circumspect betrayer of confidence is liable to make mistakes. The liar needs a good memory, so does the secret-monger who tells truth when he should not. One of the greatest calamities to which he is liable, is a confusion of persons, arising out of a multiplicity of confidences, which is very apt to bring him round with his profound secret, after he has travelled over the whole town to tell it, to the source whence he originally derived it; and to lead him into the fatal blunder of retailing it confidentially to the very man who had first in confidence retailed it to him.

It was by such a blunder of memory that I first found out Peter Still—first discovered that although he seemed “close as oak,” he was in reality porous all over; incapable of retaining a private fact, even though it should happen to be that he himself was Mrs. Brownrigg’s grandson.

“It must go no further,” said I to him, innocently, one day; “but since you are speaking with such interest of our friend the Rev. Mr. Hectic, I must tell you—and to you only shall I mention it, in strict confidence—that he is now very decidedly imbued with Puseyite opinions.”

“By the way,” he remarked to me three weeks afterwards, “as we are talking of friend Hectic, I may whisper to you confidentially” (and here his voice took an inward and most significant tone), “that the clergy-

man in question discovers of late a decided leaning to the principles of Puseyism."

Peter Still, the sly dog! conceives himself to be far from destitute of a defence, should these charges of betrayal of trust be ever cast in his teeth. His answer to the accusation of publishing secrets will doubtless be, that he never promised concealment; and it is very true—he never did.

No; when you desire him to understand that you speak with him in confidence, he makes no comment; he utters no assurance of secrecy; but he just throws out his hand loosely, and with the back of it taps your elbow, or, perhaps, with a superior smile, gives you one or two light pats between the shoulders. The effect is electrical; the action has the air of an oath registered in heaven; and you feel what a comforting thing it is to deal with a man who never speaks but when words are wanted.

There is an old saying, undeniably true, that if three people are to keep a secret, two of them should never know it. One of these two should be Peter Still, that respectable moralist, who holds curiosity in contempt and keeps such a guard upon his tongue. The other must belong to the class represented by our loquacious acquaintance—a class that might take warning by the hero of Wordsworth's ballad, "Harry Blake," whose teeth are chattering to this hour—

Chatter, chatter, chatter still.

But the danger of being betrayed—betrayed perhaps in some tender point of confidence, and that without the smallest atom of malignity, or even unkindness—does not exist only in these two directions. There are myriads of good, trustworthy people, who never in all

their lives revealed in so many words a secret confided to them; nor indeed ever employed words at all in telling it; and yet it is as good as told. This is the middle compound class of betrayers, the great bulk of society; who, although they would all die rather than openly disclose what they have faithfully promised to conceal, will nevertheless frankly tell you that there *is* a secret, and that they happen to know it.

Then perhaps, on another occasion, when a little off their guard, they will hazard an allusion to a place, or a person, or a date: or to some circumstance on which the speculative listener is able to establish a tolerably fair guess at the concealed fact, or at the very least to build up a theory which, in its character of suspicion, is as mischievous as certainty.

Or, if hints of this nature be conscientiously withheld, there are nods and shrugs, expressive looks, and explanatory gestures; and when the true guess is at last made, there comes, to crown every other consistency, a positive refusal to afford the least further clue!—a virtuous and fixed determination *not* to say whether the guess be right or wrong!—which is all that the successful discoverer requires.

It is amongst this class, the largest and most frequently encountered, that dangers are most thickly sown. Promises of secrecy, though well-intentioned and firm, here travel over pitfalls, and the most faithful are swallowed up when entirely confident in their own integrity. People who are selfish in everything besides, are unselfish in secrets, and cannot bear to keep them to themselves. They are seized with a desire to please persons whom they do not like and have no faith in, and to commit a grievous offence against others whom they do like and who have faith in them.

If they do not at once yield up the whole treasure

they were to guard, they divest themselves piecemeal of the care of it. To keep it sacredly and entire, is to sink under an overwhelming sensation, a crushing consciousness. No matter how trivial the thing is, it becomes weighty if committed exclusively to their keeping; and the very same fact which, mentioned openly and carelessly, would be utterly insignificant in their estimation, swells in its character of a secret, into "a burden more than they can bear."

Every little secret is thus of some consequence; while the really important one acquires, under this state of feeling, such an insupportable weight and magnitude as not to admit of being safely kept by less than twenty persons at the least.

Where so very few can keep a secret quite close, however honourably engaged to do so, and where the tendency to whisper in half words, even when the interests of confiding friends are concerned, so fatally prevails, it is strange that the trumpeters of their own merits never hit upon the expediency of conveying their self-praises in the wide and sure vehicle of a secret.

Trust a bit of scandal to a whisper, and how fast and far it flies!—*because* it is whispered. Might not the good deeds, for which so very few can obtain the desired credit, become equally celebrated—might not the fame of them be as wide-spread, if instead of making *no* secret of them, we intrusted them to the ever-circulating medium of secrecy?

People fall into the capital mistake of publishing to all the world their private virtues, their benevolence, disinterestedness and temperance; but what if they were to keep the reputation of these noble qualities in the background, and just permit a friend to whisper the existence of them as a great secret, respecting which every lip was to be henceforth sealed? Universal circulation must ensue.



Let it be once stated, in strict confidence, that you stripped off your great-coat on a winter night, and wrapped it round a shivering, homeless wanderer, and the town will soon ring with your deeds of philanthropy—but the little incident must always be related as a profound secret, or its progress towards the popular ear will be slow. Such is the natural tendency of a secret to get into general circulation, and to secure the privilege of continual disclosure, that it will even carry the heavy virtues with it, and obtain popularity for desert. The gallery of the moral graces is a whispering-gallery.

The title of the old comedy written by a woman makes it a wonder that a woman should keep a secret; the real wonder is, that man should ever have had the desperate assurance to assume a superiority, to claim a more consistent fidelity, in such engagements. The sexes are doubtless well-matched, and the ready tongue finds a ready ear.

How many of those who stand, and will ever stand most firmly and strongly by our side in the hard battle of life, are weak in this delicate respect! How much of the divine love that redeems our clay from utter grossness, the hallowed affection that knits together the threads of two lives in one, is sullied and debased by this mortal frailty—the propensity to whisper when the heart prompts silence—to breathe, by the mere force of habit, into an indifferent or a curious ear, some inklings of the secret which the hushed soul should have held sacred and incommunicable for ever!

Let us, however, do justice to the just, and wish they were not the minority in the matter of keeping secrets. Let us even spare the weakness that errs through accidental temptation, so long as it does not degenerate into the vice that wilfully betrays. Let us remember how the crime of treachery carries with it its own punish-

ment; and how the abject thing that deliberately reveals what was confided to it in reliance upon its honour, makes in the very act a verbal confession of its own unutterable falsehood. The secret so betrayed should be published as a lie.

Let it moreover be some consolation to think that there are more people incapable of a breach of confidence, than those who, like the prince of praters, Charles Glib, never had a secret intrusted to them in their lives. One of them I met this morning—it was a friend to whom, of all others, every man would feel safe in confiding his private griefs, the dearest secrets of his soul.

“After the stab I have just received,” cried I, encountering my friend, “in a base betrayal of confidence, how pleasant to fix my trusting eyes once more upon such a face as yours; the face which is the mirror of your mind, but without revealing any one thing that requires to be concealed in its close and friendly recesses. It is now fifteen years since I intrusted to your sympathising bosom that dreadful and most secret story of my quarrel in Malta, and of my sudden flight—of the monstrous but reiterated charge of murder that dogged my steps, through so many cities of Europe, and cast upon my onward path a shadow—”

“Eh! what!”

“Yes,” said I, in continuation, with a fervent, a most exalted sense of the steady affection which had kept my youthful secret unwhispered, undreamed of by the most curious, the most insidious scrutineer; with an idolatrous admiration of the constancy and the delicacy of the fine mind and the warm heart on which I had so wisely relied; “yes,” I exclaimed, “fifteen or sixteen years have elapsed since I committed to your holy keeping the ghastly secret, and not even in your sleep have you allowed a single syllable of the awful narrative to

escape you! Who, after this, shall so far belie his fellow, as to say that a secret is never so safe as in one's own bosom!"

"What you say, my dear fellow," returned this faithful possessor of my confidence, "is quite right; but I don't exactly know what you are talking about; for upon my soul, to tell you the truth, I had entirely *forgotten* the whole affair, having never bestowed a thought upon it from that day to this!"

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#### ADVICE GRATIS.

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THE Advice which the author of *L'Allegro* describes—Advice "with *scrupulous* head"—springs from so very distant a branch of the family to which Advice "gratis" belongs, that there can hardly be said to be any actual relationship existing between them. Assuredly there is not the smallest personal resemblance.

"Advice gratis" wears a remarkably unscrupulous aspect. He has a long tongue which hangs half out of his mouth, a long sight which detects the approach of a victim before he has turned the corner, a long finger to twine round the button of a hapless listener, and a short memory which causes him to recommend two opposite remedies to the same patient, both wrong ones.

He is a creature wholly destitute of imagination, and although constantly found in the company of another, never yet saw anything out of himself. He substitutes self for the person he advises, and devoutly recommends as adapted to his fellow what is suited only to his own case. He never cares to consider whe-

ther you have a weak or a strong sight, so that you consent to wear his spectacles, with which you cannot see at all. He will set you dancing, but it must be in the tight boots or the crazy slippers he himself is wearing. In whatsoever you may seek his help, he offers what agrees with him, and not what agrees with you. In a pining atrophy, he bids you adopt the system applicable to his own gout.

“Advice gratis” appears to be attended with one just principle—that it is always disposed of at its exact value; but this is an error; for seldom can we follow advice gratis, for nothing.

That the strongest and wisest, the best armed and the most knowing, often need advice, is not to be denied; the king’s minister might have taken it profitably from the lips of the king’s jester upon a thousand occasions. Great wits may sometimes get very needful help from very dull people; as we see an eclipse best by looking through smoked glass.

The bone-knife, there is no disputing the fact, was found, with its blunt edge, a better paper-cutter than the razor; but ever since the days of Swift—and before, even up to the birth of History—the bone-knife has boasted of itself as decidedly the best instrument to shave with.

It is so with the clever people who press their service at all times and in all ways in the form of advice. Because they are not voted utterly useless, they must claim to be useful universally. Because you needed a few drops of advice once, you must be drenched with it. The physician might wait till he is called in; but he bursts upon us at all hours and places—insisting that we shall take the draught, because it would do *him* good. The advice-giver will compel us to have our new shoes made by his last.



It may be argued that the widely-prevailing habit of proffering advice, unasked and unwanted, upon all subjects, is a token of philanthropic concern and charitable interest in the affairs of humanity. It does seem generous in idle people to bestow their wise thoughts and precious time upon us of their own free will, and as often as they are *not* solicited.

When our old acquaintance in story lost his horse, nobody gave him one in place of it; but when he lost his wife, every family in town offered him another. Thus it is, that this much-vilified human nature will give away a part of itself, its flesh and blood, its finest store of mental wealth, its scanty allowance even of invaluable and irrecoverable time, for the benefit of one who neither claims nor needs the gift.

But in answer to this, it must be urged, that the advice-giver does not actually make a sacrifice, on the score either of thought or time; for though he may put his tongue to some little trouble, it does not often happen that he troubles his brain about the business; and as for the intricate affairs over which you, who best know them, have pondered long—presto! he simplifies and cuts them short in half a second!

Before any of us doubt, let us call to mind how slowly men deliberate upon their own concerns, and in what an off-hand and summary way they decide upon the same points submitted for their judgment by others.

When a step involving important but doubtful consequences is before us, we draw back, pause, advance, shrink again, ponder, look behind, try the ground with the foot, flinch, resolve finally, and yet are slow to take it; but in the case of a friend pausing at the very same step, we drag him back or push him on without much consultation. We look at the position from our point of view, not from his, and see few of the difficulties

which would be palpable enough, if we were actor instead of adviser.

Were it, however, otherwise—if the giver of Advice gratis had bestowed both time and trouble upon the knotty point—pondering, weighing, and changing places with his victims, before he counselled them to stir—still must he be voted one of the most intrusive and self-sufficient personages that ever obtained toleration, age after age, in every country, on the plea of good nature and benevolence.

For what a height of conceit and impertinence must the giver of Advice gratis have attained to, before he can pretend to tell us that he has surveyed in an hour what it had taken us years to explore ; unravelled in a day the threads of our long life ; mastered our secrets and plucked out the heart of our mystery ; that he knows our affairs better than we do ; that he can judge, upon a slight acquaintance, more accurately of what falls in with our interest than we can who are familiar with whatsoever affects it ; that he, a foreigner, can speak English better than ourselves ; that, tyro as he is, he can beat us in that very study which we have most pursued ; that he is infinitely our superior, a wiser, a more reflecting, a more practical man ; as far above us as *Nous* the schoolmaster is above young Dolt or little Dog's-ear.

. All this he plainly says to the understanding, though not to the ear. He bids you stand aside while he looks in the glass to show you your own image. The contradiction, that Coleridge's picture was more like him than Coleridge was like himself, has no subtlety for the gratuitous adviser—it is perfectly clear. He would act your part more correctly, more like life, than you would. He comes to you as an amateur lunacy-commissioner, and assumes that you are incapable of managing your

own affairs. Not only does he contend that the bystander must see most of the game, but he generally concludes that the players know nothing at all about it.

Does this in reality mean anything less than the most intolerable assurance and conceit? What ground has the advice-giver for assuming that you are ignorant of what you ought most to know? And even if he had reason to esteem himself better informed than yourself on a given point, what degree of decency does he observe when he thrusts himself forward to tell you of the fact? Superior, either in the power of forming an opinion, in dispassionate observation, in a sense of justice, in decision of conduct, or in dexterity of management, he manifestly conceives himself to be—and indeed boasts of being—when he steps up with his patronizing piece of counsel.

Be by your friends advised

is his morning and evening song—but what is the moral of it? And why are your friends, without evidence produced of their qualifications, to be constituted your law-makers?

If you are translating an ode of Horace, you must adopt his reading, though he never got further with his verbs than the second conjugation, *Moneo, I advise*. If you determine, after a long and patient watching of character and inclination, upon making your son a shipwright, he bids you take his advice and make the boy a dancing-master, or you will repent it to the longest day you have to live; and if you were a fox, he would earnestly advise you to cut off your tail, because he had left his in a trap.

In defiance of the proverb, it is wise and right to look a gift horse in the mouth. Serve gift-advice in the same way, for sometimes it has teeth that bite sharply.

The best excuse that offers for the freedom and pertinacity evinced by volunteer advice-givers is, that they never by any accident have reason to presume that their counsel will be followed. There is to be sure something in this that acquits them of all criminal design, and leaves them convicted only of impudent vanity, and vexatious interference. Of the myriads to whom such phrases as—

“ If I might presume to advise—”

“ If you would but take my advice—”

“ Now, pray, without another word, be advised by me—”

With fifty variations of the same note of superior wisdom and voluntary patronage—of the myriads to whom this phraseology is common, not one in a thousand expects, while using it, that it will ever penetrate beyond the ear of the listener. Not one of them all so much as dreams that the listener will really act upon the advice, bestowed as it was with every manifestation of anxiety and fervour.

They all know pretty well, that, practically, there is something in the very nature of advice which gives it rather a repelling than an attracting character. When it does move us, the movement is usually contrary to the tendency of the counsel ; and upon this principle, advice is occasionally applied with wonderful effect. Where an author is seen to excel in a particular style of writing, he should be told to avoid it, the better to induce him to persevere. Where he is most faulty, he should be warmly encouraged, and his faults will be abandoned. Not a few of us are Irish pigs, allowed to think we are going to Fermoy, that we may be got to move quietly in the opposite direction.

But the excuse for the givers of Advice gratis extends further than the surface, as we see if we call to mind



how astonishingly the habit is encouraged by another prevailing weakness—the practice of *asking* advice upon every subject of all comers. There is a large class of people, alive at this hour, and averaging in age half a century each, who are just as ridiculously helpless as when they were born.

Unless we note closely, we never know the extent of their miserable dependence. They can do nothing whatever if they are not advised. They have no convenience, no comfort, while they are left to their free will.

The expressions quoted above from the mouths of the many-headed adviser, are matched by as varied a set of exclamations on the part of most destitute and eager-eyed applicants, wandering in troops over the world :

“ What would you advise—”

“ I do so want your advice—”

“ Well, I did think you would have advised me—”

“ Knobs advises me to try the knocker instead of pulling the bell—What is your advice ?”

You must advise them whether the pin is to be stuck on the right or the left-shoulder ; and whether they are to shut the book at the seventh or eighth chapter. Points which they alone can decide, must be decided for them. Give them but their choice, and all enjoyment has fled ; tell them that there is not the slightest difference, and they are distracted by the increasing difficulty.

Nor are the systematic and habitual seekers of advice at all particular in their selection of advisers. Anybody's opinion will lend the prop they require. They never pause to consider whether the persons addressed ever had, or ever can have, the slightest pretensions to play the oracle on such a subject.

"What would you advise?" is the imploring appeal to all passers-by: whether the question relate to a lame horse or a cameo, whether the questioned party be pedlar or prince.

"I am recommended to purchase this cat, Sir Matthew—he's a Persian, I believe, and scarce—what would you advise?"

"Not competent to form a judgment, ma'am," said Sir M., glancing momentarily downward at the intruding animal, and then quietly proceeding with his duck and peas—for it was at dinner.

"He's very handsome—do look!"

"I suppose so" (here another glance, with a spilling of peas): "but I lament, ma'am, my total ignorance of everything relating to cats, both domestic and foreign."

"Do you think him at all like the cat in the pretty Persian story?"

"Can't say I ever read that story, ma'am."

"But don't you think the ears something like—"

"Never read the account, ma'am," repeated Sir M., pursuing his peas with tremendous avidity.

"These marks, Sir Matthew—Come here, you beauty—" (a stare first, and then a smile from Sir M.)—"these marks add to his value, you know—"

"No, I do not, ma'am!"

"I wish you would give me your honest opinion now of the breed."

"Haven't an idea on the subject, upon my honour," returned Sir Matthew, in a final tone, re-collecting his scattered peas.

"Should you think thirty guineas dear?—Let me have your advice—"

"But I should mislead you—I'm the worst in the world—so totally unconnected with cats, so unacquainted—"

“The tail, you observe, Sir Matthew, is of the true character.”

“No doubt, ma’am,” replied the pestered pea-hunter, dropping fifty from his fork for about the sixth time ; “and to an admirer of cat’s tails, it must be a treat indeed !”

All the lady wanted was advice ; she was not so unreasonable as to demand a knowledge of the subject besides ; but some people are *so* fastidious.

As there must often be presumption in the unconsidered proffer of advice upon numerous subjects, so the solicitation of it must frequently contain one of the most valuable of compliments. We cannot properly seek counsel on matters of consequence, without attributing to the adviser the possession of some ennobling gifts—some qualities of judgment and of sincerity to which we respectfully defer. For the sake of both parties, advice should be as cautiously asked as given. The help, in the form of true counsel, which we can best accord one another, will never be secured but by the nicest discrimination in the choice of advisers. To ask advice at random, is too often to call upon the hatter to clothe the body, and the tailor the head ; and to receive it in the same way, is to permit the lawyer to treat our *ague*, and the physician our *chancery-suit*.

In most cases, it is thought enough to know, when advice is sought, that it is asked of a friend ; and to two persons, the most opposite in all qualities of judgment and experience, the same question is put, with equal confidence in the integrity which is perhaps the sole qualification of both. The different counsel thus obtained, sends out the puzzled querist in quest of an umpire ; till the umpire is sought in every acquaintance that can answer a question without considering its bearings.

In choosing councillors and adopting advice, much care is requisite to avoid being taken in by the showy qualities. We may always remember with usefulness the question put by the great Mrs. Siddons to the shopman, who, handing her some muslin for a dress, was in love with its pattern, and in raptures with its colour.

"Young man," said she, in a full and measured tone, which, startling his nerves, seemed to carry a great moral lesson, a solemn admonition and warning into his soul, "young man, WILL IT WASH?"

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### ET-CETERA.

(THE REMINISCENCES OF MR. FITZBEETLE).

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"And are et-ceteras nothing!"—PISTOL.

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EVERY man has his foul fiend—(thus said Mr. Fitzbeetle, beginning the narrative of his experiences)—every man has his foul fiend, of whom it behoves him to beware. The fiend attendant upon us all takes infinite shapes, and bears myriads of names, in languages unspeakable. My own fiend has a familiar Latin cognomen; he is called Et-cetera. I have known him by name ever since I learned the alphabet, but I have only lately discovered *him*.

Edgar's madness was a fiction, but his foul fiend was a reality like Lear's fool. The sham maniac never knew it, but there was actually a follower at his heels wherever he went, vexing him unaware. It were as easy to separate ourselves from the shadow we cast in the sunshine, or to outrun the echoes of our footsteps, as to part company with our fiend; to distance him, to



trip him up, even when we are conscious of his presence; but we seldom detect this private and invisible attendant pursuing us, until life's day begins to darken.

We all remember, when we have once read, that fearful and picturesque lesson of Bulwer's—the story of the man who panted for solitude, utter solitude, who hated the faces of his brethren, and slew the grinning, chattering fellow, cast with him on the desert island, because he would not keep on his own side of the stream, and consent to be alone. Well, this lover of loneliness, when he had thus got rid of this grinning, chattering impersonation of Society, and sought repose in the bosom of sweet Solitude, found he could never be alone more. Never for an instant could he be alone now,—for the grinning, chattering thing walked with him and ran with him, slept beside him at night, and sat opposite to him at dinner. And when on his return to Europe the physician, thinking to cure the suffering sinner, led him into an apartment, the floor of which was covered with a layer of wet sand, and in the middle of the room said,

“You and I are alone here, *he* is not with us,”—the lover of solitude answered by pointing to the sand, on which the footprints of three persons, from the door to the centre where they stood, were distinctly visible, and as the two living men walked farther, wherever they went the feet of a third moving creature left their prints upon the floor also.

Why we can no more run away from the fiend we have once allowed to tread upon our heels, than the misanthrope could from his victim. We permit, nay encourage, the growth of a habit to which, without knowing it, we become a slave, and from which, while liberty is worth having, there is no escape. Each, then, has his foul fiend in this way, give him what name we

will. My own, as I have said, is named Et-cetera. To Et-cetera I have been a victim all my days; in Et-cetera is included all my causes of complaint; with Et-cetera every misfortune of my life has been hurried on; and yet to the influence, the potency of Et-cetera, I have always been blind.

The truth is, that from the earliest dawn of my day, I was known as a philosopher of a very literal turn of mind. I could just crawl forward and spy whatever lay conspicuously before me in the straight path. I had a tolerable eye for causes, but not for effects—I never could see these until they had happened—not one out of twenty. Any immediate consequence I might be sensible of, but not the remote ones and the contingencies. There was room in my mind for only one idea at a time.

Thus I was perfectly well aware that a shower of rain would give me a soaking, if it lasted long enough; but there my consciousness stopped short; it rarely extended its regard to the next generation of consequences, taking in the influenza and rheumatism.

So, too, I was sensible enough that eating very heartily was likely to be destructive to appetite; experience taught me this fact, and I felt it forcibly from boyhood; but I had a very indefinite notion of the next stage of results, indigestion, nightmare, apoplexy, Et-cetera.

Getting wet through, and laying down my knife and fork, in the cases in question, constituted the sum-total of what would be in my mind as inevitable and necessary consequences. All other results, however natural and certain, were not of this primary class, but fell into a category of which I rarely took the slightest notice—and then only by a great effort of the mind, after much pondering upon those things.

If not in my cradle, certainly in my early school-days,

my experience of the influences of this fiend Et-cetera, together with my insensibility, began.

But I am not going to dive so deeply into the past, as that retrograde movement would carry me. Enough, that long before I quitted the University, Et-cetera was at my heels hourly tripping me up. He attacked me terrifically, the very first breakfast I ever gave. I thought of a breakfast then, as of eggs, coffee, cream, rashers, and a pigeon-pie or so ; and thus I agreed to give some breakfasts—in a friendly way, and in the spirit of a wise young student. Bless my five simple wits, how innocent I was of words as well as forms and customs ! How little did I know what breakfast was, until they told me, in the most good-natured style of warning imaginable, that I must order champagne, Et-cetera.

And ordered they were ; and in due order their successors came ; and then departed only to be replaced by indescribables equal to them ; and, in short, in the course of two years I had won quite a reputation, and grew famous among all men of taste for my breakfasts—these breakfasts being thus relished and reputed, not at all on account of those excellent commonplaces the coffee and eggs ; not by any means on account of such unmitigated vulgarities as rashers or pigeon-pies ; nay, not for the sparkling refinement and vivacity of the champagne ; but chiefly, and above all things, for the Et-cetera, the nameless luxuries, the inexpressible ingenuity and abundance of the Et-cetera.

And very right it was that some effect should be produced by it, as it turned out to be far the heaviest item in my college account of debts, some thousands of pounds long ; for I remember my father, when called upon to pay, declaring that the charges for the more regular and necessary articles were not on a particularly

exorbitant scale, but that the demand for Et-ceteras was ruinous.

But for all that, I had no eye to Et-cetera when I became my own master. One of the first steps I took on gaining my freedom was to part with it; and at the matrimonial altar I supposed (such was the narrow limit of my understanding) that I was taking unto myself one wife as per license. My mistake soon broke upon me like a thunder-clap, and I found that I had not taken Et-cetera into account. I had a wife, it is true; but I had married also my wife's mother, three sisters, two maiden aunts, and an excellent young man, distantly related to the family, who was every way worthy of my good offices, and very fond of singing to the girls. Yes, it was quite clear that I had not made due allowance for Et-cetera.

Whatever was definitively expressed, I could readily comprehend; but whatever was not expressed, but implied, was beyond my range of thought. Thus I had compassed the idea of a wife with astonishing ease; but a wife's relations were one remove beyond, and so they were absolutely out of sight. Not after marriage, though; never for one day. A day! not "an hour of virtuous liberty" could I thenceforward command. I was in a minority of one upon every motion for freedom.

My brain was in a whirl moreover, or upon the rack rather, stretching itself to take in the conception of their direct relationship to me. Sisters I understood; but sisters-in-law, not in law related at all, were literally teasers to me. A mother was a noun substantive indisputably intelligible; but a mother-in-law, who had never borne me on the one hand, and whom I couldn't bear on the other, was a riddle; and a very bad one she was of the sort.

I felt for the unhappy husband whom Mr. Vining



represents in the pleasant farce, wherein *Old Fozzle* is so divine and *Mrs. Quickfidget* so diabolical. I went beyond even the persecuted gentleman who complained of his "Wife's Mother" to the readers of the *New Monthly Magazine*, long before the date of the farce, and I envied of all mankind, Adam only—only Adam—for his wife had neither mother nor sisters.

But envy and sympathy were alike useless. I had contracted an alliance, but luckily not my establishment; so room was made for all, including the deserving relation who, upon trial, was not half so distant as he was represented. I had married a wife whose maiden name was Legion, that was all. I was wedded, not merely to one spinster, but to a genteel private family, matrons included. When, in the ardour of my affection, I had made my charmer my own, addressing her as my adorable, and vowing that "*she only* could be mine,"—I had entirely forgotten Et-cetera. There were the family besides her. It couldn't be helped.

I thought, however, that if the time were to come over again, and the extent of the lady's relationships could be known, a prudent lover might, without running much risk of detection in those moments of rapture, change the impassioned question,

"Will you be mine alone?"

—into a guarded application to her, to drop all her troops of troublesome relatives, at once and for ever—

"Will *you alone* be mine?"

The word "family" introduced above, forcibly reminds me that in the eventful affair of marriage, I was in another sense guilty of a strange oversight, an obliviousness of latent consequences. It had merely occurred to my simple and uncalculating mind, that to get married was to get a wife. "A wife, Et-cetera," involved a train of ideas too complex, too divisible at

least to be entertained for an instant. But when the fourteenth little Fitzbeetle made his appearance in the family circle, I discovered by my finances that in arranging marriage-matters I had not provided for Et-cetera.

The same mistake I committed in my estimate of the consequences of securing a seat as representative of the worthy and independent electors of Pocketborough. The simple impression on my mind was—having but a solitary idea, I always made it a pleasing one—that a sum paid, and a seat secured, ended the matter. But woe to all short calculators who delude themselves with such false estimates! The condition complied with, and the seat contested, a tremendous train of Et-cetera broke in upon my repose. The foul fiend was not to be pacified. The large sum had gained over the large influences; but the voters, the mere Et-cetera in the calculations of my advisers, remained to be won; and when all seemed to be over, the business of paying had but just commenced.

The seat secured, or, to speak more correctly, the seat taken, a committee of the House now became my Et-cetera—the thing implied, but not expressed, in my negotiation. Sent back to Pocketborough to disburse more dexterously, though hardly more economically, the seat was again won—and now repose was in view. But another train of Et-cetera was yet to be fired; in applications without number for favours, rewards, and honours to be showered upon the worthy and independent electors of Pocketborough.

It was perfectly astounding even to me, whose wife had by no means come of an unprolific stock, how so few voters could contrive to reckon up many near and dear relations. Every one of them might have furnished an astonishing paragraph of news to the *Pocketborough Patriot*, each case exhibiting a sta-

tistical miracle, in a numerical staircase of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. If anything could have added to the wonder, it would have been found in the surprising uniformity of wants and desires that characterised the independent constituency in question.

What might have added yet to the singularity, was that while every son, grandson, et-cetera, ardently longed for a situation in the Customs or Excise, the Home Service or the Colonies, so every one in succession happened to be, of all existing specimens of precocity, the best fitted for the place specified.

One qualification only could be superadded to this; and it was, that all were equally fitted, by natural and acquired powers, for *any* place that might become vacant. The fiend Et-cetera never came in a more persecuting shape; and the pursuit of places under difficulties, which commenced on the day of my return, chanced, by a strange coincidence, to end only on the day of the next dissolution.

But hitherto I have detailed my adverse fortunes, consequent upon my inattention to the Et-cetera, in important affairs alone, in the leading events of my life. The same fate attended me, and for the same reason, in all minor concerns. For example:

When invited, all in a most marked and flattering manner, to meet Lord Blank and Mr. Dash, the greatest philosopher and the greatest poet of their time, what pleasant self-gratulations, what dignified forebodings were mine! My soul yearned for the coming night! Very true—I did not thoroughly enter into the justice of their claims to greatness, but I knew their claims were recognised. I did not profess to measure accurately their pretensions; it was enough that their pretensions were unquestioned. I divided my one idea

between them, and determined that philosophy and poetry were equal: perhaps the same thing. At all events, I should be introduced, I should converse, I should hear: and then I could *say* that this had happened. Besides, their sayings must be very unlike other men's: the one would speak diamonds, the other pearls.

But when the hour of meeting came there were Lord Blank and Mr. Dash to be sure; and there too was I. Alas! when invited to meet *them*, I had not allowed for the presence of Et-cetera. Between the great men and me, a hundred and fifty admiring obstacles in black coats or beautiful draperies interposed. There were two Somebodies, and myriads of Nobodies to obscure them. I went there to meet Blank and Dash, and I met Et-cetera. There were the Migginses and the Fribskins by scores, and one eternal squeeze and jabber they kept up; but as for the philosopher and the poet in such company, I would as soon have met the two sheriffs of London in an omnibus.

I saw the illustrious pair certainly, as one may have seen Rubini and Lablache on the stage, without the chance of a personal conference, or even an introduction; and with this material difference, that there was not the possibility of hearing the voice of either, Imagine my disappointment. A simple-minded man, I had reckoned upon a three-handed reel of discussion, Lord Blank, Mr. Dash, and myself; never dreaming of the intrusion of Et-cetera. But it is a sample of my experience.

Doubtless the reader has sometimes indulged in similar anticipations, and been similarly deceived. The Et-cetera at the end of a list of agreeable names, is frequently plain English for a bore.

Most of my friendships have been formed upon this



narrow and near-sighted principle of not taking into view the consequences entailed in an Et-cetera. My friend is not a wise man, but I love him nevertheless ; forgetting the truth conveyed in Gay's couplet—

Who knows a fool must know his brother ;  
One fop will recommend another.

My regard for a fool has attracted round me half the fools in town. My house has become a fools' paradise. My friend possesses an endless file of friends ; and in the exuberance of his sympathetic bounty he makes them all mine. There is not a single acquaintance of his in all London, but he insists on sharing him with me. Every queer creature I catch in his company I am fain to regard instantaneously as my proximate Pylades. It might be almost supposed that he obtains introductions to foolish people by the dozen, only with the benevolent design of introducing me as his very particular friend. I verily believe that he would not hesitate, if he had the power, to palm off all the inhabitants of the Friendly Islands upon me. My private Temple of Friendship is thus thrown open to the public, admittance gratis from January to December.

Charles Lamb has consigned to lasting contempt the intrusive principle involved in " Love me, love my dog ;" with that, however, I could be content, but my friend insists upon my loving every puppy that crosses his path. Who could possibly have suspected, when I was first shaking hands with a solitary Jones, that I was introducing myself to such an Et-cetera ! Jones, it is true, is quite a comet among the heavenly bodies of friendship, but unfortunately I did not calculate in time the astonishing length of his tail.

If not on this rock, I have often contrived to wreck my comfort in friendship upon another. For want of

that wise forethought, which always stops to look at Et-cetera wherever he appears, I have read some friendly bond drawn up for signature, to the close—excepting the Et-cetera!—and then freely put my hand to it. Why, I had left unread all the principal clauses, in overlooking the &c., that which I had innocently taken for an emblematic ornament, or a true-lover's knot to end with, by way of flourish. I had signed and sealed, as legibly written, to confidence, sympathy, attachment, honour, and other items; but Et-cetera at the end stood in place of words unwritten—as cash advances, bill at short date, surety, responsibility, and similar significant phrases; and not one of these sly snakes had I discerned under the grass of Et-cetera.

To take the latest example of the consequences of this oversight. It happened when my friend came to demand a clear moiety of my worldly property to support and carry into assured success his magnificent speculation. He had it, for on him personally I had every reliance; but according to habit I noticed only his own name as responsible in the concern, and totally omitted to fix one moment's attention upon the “and Co.” that followed it. “And Co.” made all the difference. Alas! my friend had an Et-cetera, and it played the foul fiend with my responsibility. Et-cetera is sometimes Latin for “And Co.”

Even in forming an ordinary acquaintance, I was often the dupe of the fiend. I met a cheerful companion, a good-natured gossip, a lively reveller, and we of course struck up an intimacy. Everything went on pleasantly and promisingly; the most agreeable intercourse was sure to be the result; all jocund hospitalities would be interchanged; when it turned out that we were reckoning without reference to the familiar but invisible demon Et-cetera.

My new acquaintance was charming, but his wife was—Et-cetera. My evil genius was his better-half. Here was the patent lock upon hospitality, the extinguisher upon lighthearted ease, the thumbscrew upon the hand of intimacy; so our lively salutations would dwindle into mere good-mornings, our good-mornings into nods across the street, till they dropped by degrees into a distance yet more respectful. This is nearly the history of my social life. Every one of its enjoyments has been clogged with a fatal Et-cetera.

Talk of the postscript's superiority to the letter in real interest and importance! What is that to the superiority of Et-cetera in meanings of mighty import, over any terms of speech which may introduce it! When Mrs. Fitzbeetle, speaking in the united voices of the genteel family who have multitudinously married me, declares that I must positively make immediate arrangements for their taking a trip to Paris, Et-cetera, I distinctly hear in the phrase now, the whole tour of France and Italy. When she announces her intention of asking a few people in the evening—just the Johnsons, Et-cetera—I justly calculate upon the presence of every live creature known to us by the sound of the voice. When the application is for a pair of ear-rings, Et-cetera, I well know that the little article asked for bears the same proportion to the desirables *unmentioned* that the protruding head of the tortoise bears to its concealed body in the shell.

Et-cetera is no longer to my ears a scrap of a dead language; it has undergone the process of translation in the liveliest manner. If my partial exposition (for this dissertation might be greatly extended) of its import and tendency, should chance to induce somebody to use it sparingly and conscientiously, to investigate it when used by others, to consider that it may mean a little too

much, and to inquire into the probable significations it comprises, that somebody may have reason to rejoice that I have introduced him here to the foul fiend—Et-cetera !

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#### APRIL FOOL'S DAY ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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I WAS breakfasting alone one drizzly, dismal morning—just about a twelvemonth ago—out of humour, out of heart—worse still, out of appetite. The weather, which cast a cold, dusky, comfortless air over every thing, had a little to do with this dolefulness, for my blue devils themselves were insensibly darkening into a leaden-coloured troop under its influence ; but without this, there was enough in my reflections to depress me.

“ I wish I had come away sooner last night,” was one of these reflections ; “ it was infernally stupid of me to stop till the cards came, and with them my usual luck.”

“ What on earth, and a long way below it, could have possessed me to touch one poisonous drop of that fresh bottle, when all my sensations combined to warn me against it ! I was a rank idiot.”

“ Perhaps I could have managed a little breakfast this morning—one cup of tea at least—if I had not tasted that atrocity at dinner, or those creams, and things ; my old consistent and remorseless enemies. I knew they would destroy me utterly for four-and-twenty hours, and yet, with a perfect recollection of the fact, I *would* have them. What a fool I am !”

“ You can't help it,” said a small, clear voice somewhere close by. I looked up, but it was growing so dark that I could hardly see the eggs before me. The



voice might have come from one of them, as the starling cried to be let out. The sound seemed distinct; but it must have been the tea-kettle singing.

"What a headache! I'm always doing something at night that I repent of in the morning. I'm a fool!"

"Not a doubt of it," said the voice that had spoken before; speaking now with greater distinctness, and certainly in the room.

A sunbeam had stolen through the gloom of the morning, and looking towards the opposite window, I saw sliding down the bright line of light, as Munchausen slid down the rainbow, the oddest little sprite imaginable. There was a shapelessness about him that cannot be figured; and a combination of all colours in one, with a continual changeableness superadded, that defies description. There was a wonderful mixture of expressions in his countenance, which was bright and pale in transitions rapid as thought; his eyes were extremely watery, large drops glittering on his lashes and running down his cheeks till they lost themselves in a dimple; but gay, youthful, wanton smiles played in profusion about his mouth like summer lightning. He had a pair of light fleecy wings, like a couple of clouds, and they were edged with sunshine. Sometimes the ragged, fluttering, formless drapery that floated about him was like a dark vapour, and in an instant it was of the azure of heaven.

As the mysterious visiter took this latter hue, a thought flashed across me. He was certainly an optical illusion—nothing more—engendered by my headache and low spirits. I rubbed my eyes, but there he was, restless and real too, looking at me with a most comical expression of mockery and compassion. There was a good-humoured and familiar waggishness over all, that won upon me mightily; and remembering that he was

my visiter, politeness instinctively came to my aid, and I inquired, signifying of course a desire that he would be seated—

“One of my blue devils possibly?”

But before I had time to utter the last word, he was altogether of a different colour, and my guess was then rendered as ridiculous as can be conceived. I laughed—and so did he, but the next instant he uttered a moan like the wind creeping into a crevice to die. Then he smiled gaily again, and his sky-blue eyes gave out a glittering shower. How absurd and whimsical!

“Not at all,” said the sprite, replying to my unuttered thought, for I had spoken not a word: “on the contrary, it is very inconsistent and natural; at least, human nature, which it represents and illustrates, is bound to think so. Permit me to introduce myself. Sir, I’m the First of April, at your service.”

And I observed that the tones of his voice varied as rapidly as the ever-shifting hues and lines of his face; the sound was sometimes like a lark’s song, and then you heard the dismal croak of a frog—but each was momentary.

“Aha!” I ejaculated; “so this is All-Fool’s Day; to be sure it is; and you are April the First, out for a holiday!”

“Holiday!” cried Young April—for it was he indeed—“holiday! Sir, I have never had one upon earth; not a half-holiday even, no, not since the birthday of Adam, your respected first parent. When his amiable partner began to have a family, I saw clearly enough that work was cut out for *me*, unintermittingly till the end of time.”

Remembering the waggish propensities of my visiter, I suspected a trick, and reminded him of his reputation as the day of mocks and flouts and deceptions and make-

believes ; the day of all others dedicated to legitimate folly ; the festival of fools.

“The busiest day in the calendar,” he returned ; “a day without a night. As you are a fool, reflect ; the wise have no time to do so. I am the day on which all the important business of life is performed, all the profound meditations of men are carried on, all their resolutions formed and violated, all their acts settled, all their dreams fabricated. I am the day when courtships are entered upon, and marriages celebrated ; when laws are brought in, read, debated, amended, carried, and revoked as soon as the mischief they were to avert has been effected ; when wars are proclaimed for the sake of peace, and treaties concluded for the sake of beginning to break them ; when commissions of inquiry are instituted as final measures, excluding the results of investigation ; when law-suits about property are commenced, and the estate is sold to defray a portion of the expenses, the true claimant going to prison to pay the balance satisfactorily ; when young congenial minds register vows of eternal friendship, and middle-aged husbands with termagant wives take the temperance-pledge, and elderlies of the feminine gender, rich and invalided, commit wedlock with their young apothecaries in the hope of recovery and long life. I am also the day when—”

Here I could not forbear an interruption : “Enough, enough, for I see your moments are too precious to be wasted. Yours are no holiday hours it is plain, and you ought to be the longest day in the year, as it is certain you are the busiest.”

“The busiest !” exclaimed my visitor, with a touch of mock-dignity ; “but you are a fool. I am the *only* one.”

“Yet coming but once a year—”

“I stay with you until my nominal turn comes round again. I am always at your elbow,—I never leave you. The other three hundred and sixty-four only exist in the almanac by sufferance; they are merged in me. I am the Year. Sum up your life, and you will find it but a series of April Fool Days. You flatter yourself—but then you are a fool—that many of your days have been given to virtue; and you even find some secret sweetness of pleasure in the recollection—but then you are a very great fool—that a few of them have passed rather less innocently. Folly was even then your foe, the tyrant that controlled and betrayed you. Men are invariably more stupid than wicked. Folly you would hug, when you shrink from vice. You talk of villany as working daily ruin in the world; why, villains, it is true, are to be seen here and there, but fools are everywhere. Ignorance being so widely spread, and operating with impunity, perpetrates more mischief than actual crime, besides being the parent of it.”

“Dr. Johnson has observed,” said I, prompted by a feeling natural to people who have nothing whatever to say——

But before I could recollect a syllable of any observation made by Dr. Johnson, my monitor, whose morality, like his merriment, had worn a jesting air throughout, so that it was clear he meant to make a fool of me in virtue of the day, had darted to the window, and was beckoning me to approach.

“See,” he cried, “how human life goes on. Look at it on All-Fools’ Day, and say, is there a folly, of all its thousands, undetectable on any other day of the year!”

By this time the clouds had cleared off, the rain which had fallen heavily had dried up, the sky had become marvellously blue, and all else was golden.



There was an astonishing clearness in the light as it fell upon the various objects around and before me. As for the solid walls of my room, I could see through them into the next house. The houses opposite, when I went to the window, seemed built of glass, and everything was transparent.

"Here's weather!" cried April, with eyes that sparkled as if they had never known water.

"Beautiful!—but then how long will it last?"

"And how long," asked my rapid, restless companion, "would you continue to like it, if it were to last for a year? Turn your eyes opposite—through that house, from the front room into the back, and through the back over the lawn into the shrubbery. There, duly retired, are Miss Spindle and Mr. Shanks, walking, whispering, and making love. Life to them wears the colours and freshness of morning; Time is now counting out his brightest sands for them; but, happy as they are, they are both eager for a change, and are plotting at this moment how they may terminate courtship. Now, look at that lady in the drawing-room; she has a wedding-ring on, you see, but her husband is away on a visit. She has shared some years of married happiness, but she is speculating at this very moment on the charms of a gay widowhood in the prime of life. Or, if you turn your glance for an instant, not longer, to the dressing-glass in the room to the left, is that pretty widow there, who is so very particular about the adjustment of black crape, thinking of anything in the world but a speedy change, and an escape from the weeds of buried love into the white blossoms of a bridal? Change, change, change! Life is all April."

My eyes, however, were more employed than my ears, so curious was the scene on every side. Through-

out the long line of streets, the tenements, great and small, from basement to parapet, seemed all window; and what was going on within was as visible as bees in a glass-hive. But everybody was occupied as everybody might be expected to be; there was nothing new except the absence of concealment; in every other respect, the several household spectacles were as familiar to my sight as the crowds of pedestrians below who hurried along the streets, hustling each other as they went.

"Everyday pleasures, everyday habits, everyday business!" remarked the first-born of the April family, chiming in with my own silent impressions, in tones that sounded like the pattering of rain against a window.

"It is Life all the year round," assented I.

"And yet," returned the sprite, "is it not a scene fashioned in all its minutest parts upon a First of April principle, and conforming in every respect to the traditional usages of the day! Where is the creature within view that is not playing the fool on his own account, or making one of his neighbour? Look first upon the throng below.

"How each man pushes to get before the other, and cannot for the life of him tell why. They are all running on false errands. How they check and retard one another in the struggle to get on, every atom of humanity playing its part with industrious energy in the confusion. You would think by the haste, the pressure, the anxious looks, the desire to outstrip, the recklessness of danger, that they must be all very honest people, hurrying to pay their debts, or very sanguine folks rushing in the fond expectation of receiving what had been promised—that they were about to emigrate, and were barely in time for the vessel, or that the Dragon of Wantley had only been shamming dead.

“But nothing unusual is the matter, and very few of them are really in a hurry; as you may soon find out, if you watch the people who hazard their lives in flying leaps over the crossings, between vehicles that tear the stones up; all to save one minute, one precious minute of that time, a quarter of an hour of which they can conveniently spare at the next print-shop window. Or having dodged, and jostled, and made desperate way through the throng, apparently on a life-and-death errand, you will see the man of breathless haste and vital business—having met an acquaintance—stop instinctively, as if he had nothing on earth to do, a long hour in the very middle of the pavement, asking the other man of velocity, whether he thinks it will rain, and informing him that there has been some sharp weather lately.

“It is not much otherwise with any of them. Those people over the way have merely come out for a stroll, and what they call a mouthful of air; which they are now taking as from the bellows of a furnace, for push, dart, drive, and get along they must! Here is a little party going to a concert; they are in capital time, but they cannot help panting and toiling on their way, not forgetting to throw upon each other the sole blame of the unfortunate lateness. This young gentleman in his new cabriolet—perhaps you are of opinion that a tender Jew is to lend him some more money this morning, as he drives at such a pace. No such thing: he has nothing on earth to do but what he is doing; the day is his own; the world is all before him, and so are the foot-passengers, who, for their parts, see him coming, and *will* cross for the pleasure of taking their chance of being run over.

“See, too, this simple old lady; how kindly she holds her pocket open to be picked, and how anxious she seems to part with the contents of her purse, and

the gold pencil-case—appealing, not to the expertness, but really to the common politeness of thieves, in whom every instinct of the gentleman must be dead, if they could remain insensible to the challenge.

“ And just cast an eye into that shop ; see, behind the counter, how the jeweller is doing his utmost to persuade his customer to swindle him to the extent of a hundred and fifty pounds more ; how little his thoughts turn upon any point but that of sending the costly commodities before him to the house of any gentleman who will be so obliging as to give his consent, and leave his address. If he can but obtain permission to send them home to somebody, if he can only get them out of his keeping, out of his shop, his object is attained, and for once, the smile on his face is the true index of his heart. Ah ! the cautious customer yields ; with a profound knowledge of his art, he had doubted long and decided ; doubted again, and declined ; then consented to take the articles at a slightly reduced figure ; and, lest he should change his mind again, the happy jeweller will take care that they shall be at his lodgings before he can get home. Oh ! charming faith—the tradesman’s true friend ; how it helps him off with his stock ! ”

“ Faith, Sir First of April ! ” exclaimed I—“ come, this is blindness and folly. The tradesman’s a fool ! ”

“ Your born brother, sir—”

“ In fact these people are all monstrous fools ! ”

“ Your own blood relations, you must recollect ; and what they are to-day, they never fail to be every day of the year—fools all ! Tantarara, fools all ! ” And the shapeless, shifting, volatile sprite began to chirrup like a bird in the sunshine.

As I turned to look at him, endeavouring to get a more settled idea of his form, the clear brightness which



had filled and lit up all the scene to its remotest corners, disappeared; clouds obscured the blue April sky, and a deep gloom crept over everything.

"Here's weather!" cried I, just as Young April had cried before me, when the blue and golden light broke upon us.

"How long will it last?" rejoined the now almost invisible sprite, in my own words. I felt the retort as a rebuke, and my feeling was immediately divined.

"How inconsistent you April fools are!" said my spirit-visiter. "When the gladness of heaven comes upon the world, when the air is balm, the sky brightest, the sun tenderest and warmest, the earth greenest and fairest; you shrink ungraciously from the proffered joy, and darken the brilliancy without by a sense of despondency, expressed in 'How long will it last?' But when the inevitable shadow comes, when the glad heaven is temporarily hidden, and the chilling cloud hangs over the earth, stifling its sweetness, and dispersing its lustre in sad tears, then the feeling of anticipation, which should be bright as it was dark before, is unawakened; and Hope cries not out, as Discontent had cried, 'How long?'"

"Come," thought I, straining my eyes to get a clearer view of my comical monitor, who was, however, enveloped in a dusky cloak that disclosed nothing, "this from the First of April is sufficiently sentimental;" but feeling bound to offer some reply, I was proceeding to remark again that Dr. Johnson had observed—

"Not he," interrupted my April sprite, in a sharp tone like a sudden gust of wind; "he observed as little as anybody, though he thought a great deal. Observe for yourself; when fools are the objects of your survey, by studying others you obtain self-knowledge, you know. Come, look at your opposite neighbours!"

I directed my eyes in obedience to the command, for there was something in the voice which, though mingled with laughter and mockery, enforced compliance; and, dark as the day had become, I found no difficulty in discerning objects in the apartments opposite. There, in one of the attics, by a feeble light that gave the melancholy of the scene a still more sickly hue, sat a figure well known to me in bookish history and Academy pictures, though I had never actually encountered it in life; a meagre youth, evidently enduring, not struggling with, poverty—evidently, too, in ill health—writing indifferent sonnets and unequal elegies, sad as night, for fame—yea, in the hope of a bright fame: and in the very next room sat a greybeard, old enough to know better, a hale man, fully capable of digging, or of cross-sweeping at the least, there that strong man sat, writing real histories, not romances, with the view of making money—bright and solid gold.

“Is it so?” I inquired, half-inclined to believe that I was marked out for a victim to the make-believe humours of the day; “and is this the game they play at all the year round? Sit they so, pen in hand, from one First of April to another, partly self-cheated, partly duped by the sweet but cruel promises of the distributors of laurels and the proprietors of ledgers! Then two of our authors are fools—that’s certain.”

“Fools all!” said the chuckling notes of my dimly-seen companion.

Below this was a far brighter and more vivacious scene. Within a brilliant chamber, luxuriantly adorned, reclined its mistress, in the easiest of chairs, but in the uneasiest of humours. Jewels were tossed about, and elegancies of many a fantastic shape were upset in various parts of the boudoir, which was in admired disorder. A storm had been blowing there—nay, was

blowing still. The lady was waging war against her lover, who, yet at her feet (where he was not at all safe) imploring forgiveness, had dared to manifest insensibility to her modest wish for new settlements; an annuity, double its existing amount, for life, with a thousand or two for present trinkets, and to silence intrusive, low-born tradesmen, who had contracted a habit of knocking at the door.

It was not "beauty's door of glass" through which I gazed, for not a feature, in its very best of days, could Beauty have contributed to her face; never, in short, was Plainness more distinctly visible to the naked eye. Fury, perhaps, rather improved the countenance, by giving to it a character of some kind, though not the most fascinating. Sour, petulant, and vain, there was not a grace of mind, a charm of feeling, in the fair one's composition, to atone for external defects.

Yet what of all this was visible to the eyes of the enslaved, the enraptured lover? Of what want of heart or mind did his blind passion permit him to be conscious? To his sight she was an angel—in his estimation a dove supremely gentle. For her he had impaired his fortune, damaged his reputation, spotted all that was purest in his nature, outraged the sanctities of his home, and banished its holy calm of happiness for ever. This he had willingly done, and he now as willingly submitted to the imperious whims of his vain and avaricious tyrant as he had flattered her vanities; but it would avail nothing; affection, gratitude, he could not command—for there is no water in a dry well—and he could only purchase an insulting peace, a cold and insolent toleration, by yielding to fresh exactions, and bowing to unbridled humours.

I closed my eyes upon the scene in inexpressible disgust. "After all," said I, to little April, "the fair

tyrant is as silly as she is saucy. She will play with her 'moth with the golden wings' until she loses him. She is a fool."

"Fools all!" cried little April again; and then, in a sweet and gentle tone, he bade me look upon a different scene, which was quite as clear as that before me in its outline and details, although it seemed at a great distance off.

As I looked in the direction pointed out, and saw with astonishing distinctness the sorrowful but lovely picture presented there, a gentle shower of rain fell upon the intervening scene, and the small blue eyes of April dropped glistening tears.

In a room stored with those comforts which are to be felt rather than described as constituting a home—furnished with prints, books, and music—sat a lady who had not outlived early youth, though its lustre had become a quiet shining light, and its gay freshness had subsided into a pensive charm—which the soul of the gazer felt to be more sweet and winning still. She was exquisitely beautiful, with calm eyes, a broad fair brow, and a mouth so soft and flexible, that the tenderest emotions, as well as the loftiest thoughts, could never want expression in its sensibility. Her figure was slight, yet it wore a noble air, and lacked no grace of dress that the purest taste in the arts of adornment could bestow.

She was not alone. A girl with the face of her mother—a mere child—was at her knees, repeating a simple lesson, ending with the evening prayer, a score of kisses, and prattle about "papa."

"Riddle too complex for solution!" I exclaimed. "Is this an April trick or a living truth! Is it *his* wife—*his* child? Can *he*, the trampled minister to the vices and vanities of his unsightly and odious tyrant,



the plundered of her avarice, the scorned of her caprice, be the master of such a home, the free tenant of such a paradise, the lord of such beauty and such affections? Can the poorest crawler alive be the possessor of such priceless riches?"

"The man's a fool!" whispered the voice beside me.

"Fool! Yes, but has the wide world such another?"

"Plenty of them walking about," said April the First, laughing and crying both in a breath.

"Look elsewhere," he continued, without losing the sixtieth part of a moment.

At a little distance, in a room whose centre was occupied by a large desk surmounted by brass rods, across which lay ebony rulers, dusty papers tied with tape that never could have been red, and books bound in dirty parchment that might possibly have been the skins of lawyers in former ages, were congregated some half-dozen unpleasant men of business, in discussion upon a deed for signature. One of the party affixed his hand to it, drew forth bank-notes of large amount, together with a check-book, from which he gave drafts of high figure, and the transaction was concluded. He was a keen, quick-witted, experienced speculator—really wealthy—and he had taken one of the national theatres, having first paid down, past mistake, the full rent for the season.

In the theatre itself, which was close by, I could discern the principal tragedian alone upon the stage, studying and rehearsing a light comedy part—the figure resembled the ghost of John Kemble, practising himself for appearance in the apparition of *Charles Surface*. And in the green-room sat a dramatist, a man of genuine talent and elevated tastes, writing with the best of his brain and animal spirits, a legitimate five-act comedy, in the sure and certain hope of meeting the

most honest and gentlemanly treatment; confident, in fact, that it would be admirably acted, and that he should be liberally paid for it.

At these spectacles, I could not suppress the resentment natural to a generous mind, when it discovers that it has been made the victim of a "dead take-in."

"Here, Sir Sprite," said I, "you are playing April-day pranks at my expense, making me the sole fool of the party. These men have taken a final leave of their senses. They are not fools, but maniacs."

"Fools all!" laughed April the First. "*Veluti in speculum*. The mirror is wide enough for authors, actors, and audience. Come, look again."

So I did, but was a little bewildered by the multitude of visions—if so they might be called, though in truth they were not unfamiliar realities—staring upon me, rather than I on them, from every nook and corner of the wide transparency before me. Every cloud, by this time, had dissolved in light, and a world of action was working, like steam-engines turned into semblances of humanity, under my unstrained and clearly-seeing eyes.

Peeping into No. 16, on the other side of the way, I detected that mean-souled scapegrace, Grint, "putting the question," as the phrase used to be, but "popping" it, as modern pronunciation goes, to the rich heiress, Miss Bankstock, for the sole sake of her three hundred in the three-and-a-halves; and the rich heiress accepted him, for the simple reason that she hated Wiggle. And next door, in that sensible, and, indeed, devout family, there was a very distressing scene, to which I was compelled to be a witness—a conscientious wrangle, the more lamentable, as every one said, because it was associated with religion; and a very desperate lovers' quarrel ensued between the most discreet and sober-

minded of young couples, and all about the biscuit that Uncle Fry cracked and munched in church on Sunday morning ; Jane protesting that it was an Abernethy, and Joseph vehemently asserting that it was a captain's.

“ Fools all !” said little April, as, in an infinite variety of keys, he said upon numberless occasions, with a perseverance worthy of the eloquent “ fudge” of friend Burchell himself.

The secret conferences for a more effectual development of the mesmeric principle ; the open meetings for the institution of railroads to connect the districts which are most destitute of education with county prisons, thereby saving the cost of erecting parish schools ; the plans for importing cotton-manufactures from America, instead of the raw material, thus lessening the evil of excessive labour in our factories ; and all the other schemes of a truly grand and practical character with which I easily became acquainted, are subjects for special reports, and not herein to be indicated or vindicated. The less so, indeed, as they produced in my mind a complexity of ideas, and a confusion of images, that by degrees, in the course of several hours it might be, rendered the faculties of sight and hearing considerably less acute, and ultimately shut up both.

The sun had now again withdrawn the vivifying influence which gave a transparent character to every visible object in the outer world ; the duskiness increased to darkness ; not only the inhabitants, but the tenements, and the streets themselves, faded utterly from view ; and the sole token of the existence of such a scene as I had but lately witnessed was an audible one—a tremendous clatter as of stone-throwing—a smash of glass, past the power of Brobdignagian hailstones

rattling on conservatories miles in circumference, to describe ; a sound that proclaimed an earthquake in the fragile, glazier-built city ; the destruction of a worse than "crockery-ware metropolis."

I had only time for a single reflection, brief as a flash of lightning :

"These unhappy people," thought I, "all lived in glass-houses ; alas ! then, it was their destiny to throw stones."

"All fools !" said a small, clear, laughing, and yet dying voice in my ear, as I started up in broad daylight, and saw, with the most sober gaze in the world, the face of my landlady, intruding at the partially opened door—opened sufficiently wide to admit her head ; but how that pair of extended eyes, straining their powers to take in a thousand wonders at once, ever found admittance at so contracted a space, is a mystery for ever ; but there they were, and in an audible voice they spake, before her tongue had power to move, "What *is* the matter ?"

"Come in, Mrs. Mildmay. Why, so I seem to have knocked over the breakfast-table ?"

"Yes, to be sure, sir, and all that nice new set—"

"Yes ; what is the day of the month, Mrs. Mildmay ?"

"The second, sir."

"The first, you mean ; the first of April !"

"No, sir, All-Fools' Day is over till next year."

"And do you mean to tell me that I have been asleep in this chair all the first day of the month—asleep here for a whole four-and-twenty hours ?"

"Why, not exactly *four-and-twenty*," explained my landlady ; "it was just eleven o'clock yesterday when we found you asleep, and now it's twelve !"

"It is, eh ? Oh, very well, Mrs. Mildmay ; then



send me up oceans of breakfast immediately ; and let me have a fire this instant, large enough to roast a great fool at."

"Certainly, sir," said the kind soul, hurrying out of the room ; "I'm sure you must be cold !"

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### HOW TO MAKE A LONG DAY.

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TIME, as we learn from the lips of one of truth's wittiest expositors, can amble, trot, and gallop—and he can also stand still. How absurd to figure him to the mechanical understanding as a traveller who knows but one unvarying pace, and no pause at all from century to century!

To measure every day simply by the number of minutes it contains is to act upon a most fallacious and deceptive principle. When we have, with the nicest exactness, estimated the hours according to their duration in seconds, we may determine, with precisely the same accuracy, the value of bank-notes by their weight. The work of the scale in one case would be performed by the clock in the other ; the large note and the small, both being of the same size, would be matched by the long hour and the short, each counting a like number of seconds.

Nothing is liable to such continual and extraordinary variation as time ; the present hour differing so from the next, that the minutes of one may be as years in the other ; nay, as a vast eternity, ever dying and yet endless. Our lamentations over the shortness of life might be spared when we reflect upon the many long days that fall to the lot of every creature in his turn ;

though there is little perhaps of liveliness in the thought that all these long days are emphatically and necessarily the dull ones of our year, and that this very dulness regulates the degrees of their duration. Nor is it of much avail to seek comfort by counting up the happier days that have intervened, for these are always found to be the shortest in the calendar.

But for the Long Days. Some people cultivate a habit of bespeaking them; they have them "to order" as often as they please. These are the persons who, without the slightest reference to any one thing in the world save a friendly sentiment which has long subsisted between themselves and somebody whom perhaps they seldom meet, blandly and kindly, but rashly, madly, and destructively invite the said somebody to come and spend "a long day" with them! Without one solitary thought bestowed on the means of getting through the twelve hours, they ask a fellow-creature to come, with all his preconcerted and extempore tediousness, and help to draw out the dreary dozen into twenty-four!

Let no such amiable idiots bewail the brevity of their mortal date, when they can thus lengthen their days at will, simply by inviting an acquaintance to exercise a similar power equally possessed by him! The "long day" is sure to be theirs, under such circumstances; no matter whether the wind be in the east or the west, whether the rain pelts or the sun parches, whether the guest be Mr. or Mrs. Damper; that long, long day is destined to be their own, as certain as that they must be at home and down early at breakfast, to welcome their esteemed and excellent visitor, who had with glorious self-denial risen at daybreak, on purpose to enjoy a full brimming measure of time—to make for once a long day of it.

"Come and spend a long day with us," said a kind simpleton, as he chanced to reflect that he *could* contrive to be at home on Tuesday, and that Mrs. Damper (for Mrs. it is, whatever may be the sex) was really a worthy old soul, who would not knowingly be the death of a mite, and almost deserved to be canonized. Yes, and there accordingly sits Mrs. Damper, in a passive, procrastinating state of mind, with a most helpless and inanimate deficiency of everything except amity, and seeming well content to make the day as long as the friendship to which it is sacrificed.

What are you to do? You can't be wondering what o'clock it is before eleven in the morning, or hurrying up luncheon on the heels of breakfast, or ordering dinner at half-past one. Yet what is to be done with the time? How is that long day to be got through; by what magical process is the sun to be sunk in the sea at high noon, and night brought forth before her time, so that Mrs. Damper may go?

Questions, these, that should have been thought of before—together with the momentous but utterly disregarded fact that between the much-respected Mrs. Damper and yourself there existed nothing whatever in common, save that friendly sentiment which had originated the ruinous suggestion of spending a long day together. And how should such a sentiment as that, however profound and ardent, act as a spur to the dawdler, Time? Mere respect for a companion's virtues has small power to bestow on the leaden-footed hours the fleetness of the wind. We cannot make dullness delightful by looking all day in the dear creature's face, and thinking how very good she is. In fact, there is no spending a day with Mrs. Damper, though at the rate at which time passes in her company it is very easy to cram a seven days' martyrdom into one.

Where every taste and every habit, where temper, disposition, and character all completely differ, it is rather difficult (there is little rashness in this assertion) to make choice of subjects for conversation on which both parties may be agreed; and it is even more difficult still (this may be affirmed on oath), where one of two persons declines to utter a single word beyond a mere negative or affirmative, to keep up a conversation at all. If you have any doubts upon this point, invite some Damper (male or female) of your acquaintance to spend a long day with you, and then try to talk—not to, nor at, but with her.

There is nothing that can make the day long like long-suffering; and there is no long-suffering like the protracted, weary, ever renewing and ever baffled effort to extract words from the mouth of the tongue-tied, and amuse the unamusable.

The pursuit of chit-chat under difficulties hardly describes this effort when the Dampers are concerned; impossibilities meet the attempt at every new essay of what ought to be the pleasantest and most readily reciprocated of duties. They hear and say nothing. Subject after subject, appropriate to the occasion, or speculative and wide of the mark, is started—and passed as a topic on which their lips are for ever sealed. Stores of memory, treasures of observation, and the idlest frivolities of the hour, are produced and turned over in succession, and a “very possible,” or a “so I hear,” is the full extent of the arduously elicited rejoinder. Silence, or a bare monosyllable, is for the most part the cold water they fling in the flushed and glowing face of sociality.

To encounter one of the tribe in a room full of agreeable people, and be obliged by courtesy to make a hopeless experiment upon such a nature for two minutes



together, and not more, is to feel a chill and cramp visiting the most susceptible parts of the frame; but to have one for a guest, face to face, side by side, for a day, a long day, a live-long day, is to endure more than man, born to be a listener as well as a talker, was meant unmaddened to bear.

But when speech fails there is action; which, however, is equally impotent. Some sport is going on, there is a view half a mile off, the garden is to be traversed, and the scantiest possible praise will more than suffice for the rose-trees and the vegetables, though neither are despicable. It is not to be had; all gardens are common-places, sports are not understood now, and no view in nature ever equalled by many degrees the picturesque in a portfolio of prints. This seems to point to a hope; which of course upon trial proves to be a forlorn one. The portfolio, rich in number as well as excellence, just serves to fill up a three minutes' gap, for by that time every delicacy of art it contains has been, with no especial delicacy of handling, turned over, with or without remark, with or without pause; and the undiminished day demands new avocations, amusements, or sources of interest, which become rare in exact proportion to the tediousness of time's interminable march over the flat and barren ground.

There are few things more disheartening, and in some cases even appalling, than to lose a pet subject for the interchange of remark (one on which we have relied for relief) by its falling still-born. Dropped as soon as started, it is gone for that day, and is no more capable of restoration than the plucked rose is of being put back again upon the tree. Another is to be sought for, a topic of promise; but it is nipped like the rest in the bud. We think once more, drearily and wearily, of themes likely to suit, and find them only to fail.

The allusion ingeniously made, and the anecdote happily timed, are alike thrown away. They fill up the interval of one minute and forty seconds, but suggesting to the hearer no rejoinder, no retort, no peg whereon to hang a comment longer than a sigh, lapse into silence without a result. Lay the train as you will it sets fire to nothing, and idea after idea rises up, apparently fruitful and teeming, only to die on a sudden without progeny, for want of sympathy to act upon.

And perhaps there is on the table all the time, under our eyes, the second volume of a new story, which we have read deeply into already, and are dying inwardly to finish! But how prevail upon Mr. Deadweight before us—Deadweight or Damper, whom we actually asked to come and spend a long day with us—to read too! In vain we push half-a-dozen volumes towards him, or slip an easy, pleasant-looking novelty into his very hand; in vain we recommend, as something vastly curious, and astonishingly short, the passage at page thirty-seven, with that capital bit over leaf. He is not to be tempted; he takes the book with a smile, and in the turning of the leaf it is laid down. Illustrations and all, it is not food for him for an instant; and his easy disengaged look, in which calm expectation appears, tells you at once that he is quite prepared for any further exertions which your untiring spirit may make in some new direction for his entertainment. You cannot be too industrious, he is always ready.

So drags on the heavy day, dedicated to friendly sentiment. Time, with wings perfectly featherless, and clogs upon his feet, drops from his glass one grain of sand at a time. And yet, when the tardy and reluctant clock proclaims at length, in tones that are as the unbolting and creaking of a dungeon-door, the appointed hour of departure, most certainly will Damper give a

little start at the last stroke, and protest that it is often quite wonderful how the hours slip away. He can hardly believe it is so late, and actually looks at his watch, which he shows you, asking at the same time if you had dreamed of such a thing! Time has flown indeed, he cries; not one moment of *ennui*; the day altogether has been such a delightful one; he can never thank you enough, but pledges his word and honour to be with you again soon.

And he will, if you don't mind. For he has had in truth a happy time of it, in imperturbably watching and counting up your numerous expedients for his comfort; in remarking your anxiety to relieve his inveterate dulness, your amiable torture under the consciousness of failing; your kind attention in setting before him the very dish he is so fond of—at any other time, but not to be tasted on this occasion; and the wine he prefers—only he is forbidden to drink it just now. His day, in fact, has seemed *so* short: solely because he has succeeded in making it so long to somebody else.

But old *Tedium Vitæ*, the great lengthener of days, seizes upon the soul, sometimes, with quite as remorseless a grip, when our companion for the day is the hearty, bustling, zealous, excellent good fellow, who can never by any possibility do enough for us. Brisk, for example:—he is always for making the day long, by devising some occupation for every minute of it; and seems to be of opinion that the time can never be made to pass at all, if not entirely filled up; that the day cannot be got through, while a single second remains unappropriated to a special purpose.

He can no more tolerate a rest, whether in conversation, at dinner, or in any social diversion, than Astley could in the case of the drummer in his orchestra.

Whether he has you in doors or out, he is resolved on not losing a moment. If you go to spend a long day with him, expect to hear him cry before your hat's off, or "How are you?" has reached the tip of your tongue—

"Quite well! Come, let's lose no time!"

Whether he finds you in Paris or London, where you have been scores of times, or never in your life before—pursuing business, or prowling after pleasure—he treats you all the same; and you must have a long day with him, even if it were the last you had to live. Do the honours of the city he will; all of them in twelve hours; he insists. If he gets you out for a twenty minutes' saunter, it is a hundred chances to one but he whisks you up into the Whispering Gallery at St. Paul's, and before you can call a cab off the stand, claps you down, perhaps, among the wax-works in Baker-street.

Thence you are probably transported to five houses in succession, at which morning calls are to be made, though you know not a soul that lives there—looking in at an exhibition or two by the way; hurrying off afterwards to some place for letters, and dropping in at another place for luncheon; rushing to the Strand to make a purchase of music, and carrying it to the charming young singer at Stoke-Newington; who, happening to be that moment setting off for the concert in town, has only to be escorted to the Hanover-square Rooms; where we can just hear one song and escape—or we should hardly be in time to take the promised peep into Bedlam (having a ticket), or to see the works at the new Parliament Houses.

Then the dinner itself—it is a day's work; and the drinking is all extra. Authorities in statistics will tell you, that dining with Brisk, the hand travels upon the



average fourteen miles and a quarter within the hour, in journeys to the mouth and back again. Your ear also is kept in constant requisition throughout the whole of this long day, for Brisk has never once ceased talking, except to hear now and then the first three words of your reply—the fourth word you happen to use never fails to remind him of something he had quite forgotten to say, and would not have missed for all the world; so he begins again, in the Irish fashion, before he has quite left off.

Time, in short, is made fat and lazy with excess of pleasure and good living, and is loth to stir a foot; the hours are fed to repletion, crammed with comforts and excitement, and this over-indulgence renders them so drowsy and dull of motion, that they hardly know how to make one wing keep up with the other.

Better pass a long, dark, summer-day in the “moated grange” with Mariana—awearry, awearry! The rest, the calm, the heavy melancholy, the unrelieved desolation, would make the gloomy noon-time less slow, and bring on the needful sweetness of night sooner, than this constant racing of the spirits and dancing of the blood, amidst the whirl and giddiness of which Time seems reduced to a stand-still.

“The Longest Day I ever passed,” said B——, breaking in upon me, just at this point of my writing, and volunteering an illustration, “was spent, not in the company of such simple bores as the Brisks and the Deadweights, but in my own—in solitude—here in London, at Westminster. This, my fine fellow,” said he, brushing with his fingers as he spoke his short curly hair, nearly all gray, “was all black on the ninth of September; but the tenth day of that month, was long enough to sprinkle my locks with snow in my

twenty-seventh year; and on the following morning I woke up much as you see me.

“The circumstances? You shall have them if you like to listen.

“Papers of vital consequence—but far less to me than to others—had escaped from my hands, and by an act of the blackest treachery were to be turned to diabolical purposes. The recovery of them was an object dear to me as honour itself; for, although I had committed no crime, I had been incautious, confiding; and irretrievable ruin to a friend, perhaps to his family, might be the consequence of my act. Yes, honour, and life which depended on its preservation, were treasures no dearer to me than the possession of those precious papers which my soul yearned to see again, agonized at the bare thought of their being irrecoverable.

“By an extraordinary combination of accidents—of acts, that is to say, performed without a concurrent design by several persons unknown to each other, and equally in the dark with reference to me—I had become possessed of a clue to the packet and the purpose it was to serve. This occurrence seemed providential. Not a doubt could exist as to the blackness of the hands the packet had fallen into, or of their success to a very great extent in playing the assassin securely by the aid of such an instrument. What anguish was mine, as I remembered that but for me—all guiltless as I was—the iniquity of these wretches would have been equalled only by their impotence. I had innocently armed the snake with a mortal sting.

“To get back the papers then. How, how? A possibility, almost a chance, broke upon my mind. My imagination saw first, and then my understanding. You know I am anything but cool and methodical, and never even pretended to be guarded and foreseeing like

other people. Yet the desperate nature of this enterprise—the pitiable havoc to the peace of an excellent family then fiercely, cruelly threatened—made me, all on a sudden, skilful and even wise. I felt myself after five minutes of calm reflection a match in expedient and manœuvre for the most knowing lawyer in the land. And I was. I went to work with a hundred Inner-Temple power, of knowledge, acuteness, and dexterity. I not only felt, but I saw my way, through the first half of a labyrinth of difficulties, with a clearness that was marvellous. Marvellous it sounds, indeed, as I tell you that fine sensibility, sheer intensity of emotion, transformed me into (of all things in the world) an accomplished, a thorough-paced lawyer! Most fortunate it was that the delicacy of the affair precluded the possibility of my taking counsel's opinion. I must have lost my cause—must.

“Oh, yes, I know what you are going to say; ‘fool for his client,’ and all that. My dear fellow, that is a saying, and nothing more; a popular assertion in Lincoln's-inn, but not a truth universal. I'll argue that point with you some other time.

“Enough, that without committing my friend, or appearing in person, or betraying any circumstance that might show I had the slightest interest in the affair, I so arrested the progress of the atrocious villany, as to make it pause in its stealthy way, and turn pale just as it was flushing with conscious triumph. In perfect safety I exercised a deterring influence over the miscreants, and compelled them, by a most subtle and irresistible coercion, to meditate on the policy of restoring the ill-gotten, the invaluable papers.

“Hours, days rolled by, leaving me anxious, constantly, painfully anxious; but this policy grew more and more clear, while their proceedings grew more and

more mysterious; until at last my good genius prevailed, and it was announced—but on anonymous authority—that before the three days then next ensuing had expired the packet would be mine!

“Mine! But on conditions. These conditions placed me at their mercy, by withdrawing all the formidable show of power with which I had artfully surrounded myself. I well knew this to be merely a show; a bulwark of rushes. I was fearfully aware that they had every thing in their own hands, and that if they chose to venture forward, my mock defence could not stay or hurt them. My threat was an air-drawn dagger, but luckily they believed it to be keen steel, and the point of it turned them from their purpose. Should I comply? or, by driving them to persevere, force them into the discovery of their blindness, and my own powerlessness of opposition or revenge? I complied!

“I complied with the conditions; and sat up all the night, reading a thousand and a thousand times over, with thanksgiving and exultation, the promise in the strange handwriting, the solemn pledge conveyed to me by the unknown, that ‘before the expiration of the next three days,’ the papers would be mine—my own papers would be mine once more!

“In the morning, extreme excitement being followed by extreme exhaustion, I went to bed, and slept well and long. It was three in the afternoon before I awoke—no wonder, considering the distress of mind which had agitated my slumbers, or driven them utterly from my pillow, during every miserable night of the past fortnight.

“My first thought on starting up was—no, my dear friend, you are wrong—it was not of the packet, but of the delicious sleep that I had enjoyed.

“Oh! blessed, blessed sleep! Balm-giver more be-



neficent than gratitude in her sweet, fervid, yet faltering language can ever describe ! And when her tongue fails, let all praise-giving eloquence, how pure and simple soever, be mute ; and let the heart only speak in its tranquil, hushed, and healthful beatings.

“That happy sleep had given me new eyes—bright, keen, far-seeing eyes ! How sunny looked the world ! A black funeral-pall had been flung from off it, and an angel rose out of the place of death. Not a pall merely, but a great weight of monumental stone was rolled away, and my spirits felt that earth had risen up into a clearer sky, was even then floating as a brilliant star nearer to the source of light, and sharing more largely than before in its soul-feeding influences.

“Breathing the fresh air from the river, and with the soft colours of a September day about me, late in the afternoon I sat down to breakfast. The morning newspaper was on the table ; and—oh ! and my *letters* !

“The first glance that fell upon them showed me what they were. A fancy had momentarily darted into my mind that amongst them might possibly be—but they were quite unimportant, and the claims of a sharp appetite at that juncture were not. A joyful meal was that breakfast, dear old friend. No pale-cheeked weaver on a Sunday morning, eight little week-day toilers around him, with enough to give them all on the day of rest, and no work to do until the morrow, ever ate a heartier.

“And with little interruption to the feelings I then experienced, glided away the remaining hours of the day. To leave home for an instant was of course out of the question. Something might arrive in the interval—arrive in my absence. The receipt of it might be delayed by five minutes, a quarter of an hour even. It was like being out of the way when a life, suspended by

a thread over a drear and bottomless abyss, was to be snatched into safety and joy. It was a physical impossibility for me to go out. Do not smile at what I say, as an absurdity; but a mother could no more be absent, when her hoped-for child is to be born. That packet, those letters—unarrived as yet—were virtually a part of me.

“Late, but not very late at night, my eyes closed in sleep upon the first of my three days; and though dreaming, not uncheerily, of double knocks at the door, dim-seen, misty messengers, and large letters with one or more seals—the motto, ‘The return of the dove to the ark,’—the silent hours moved in their starry course scarcely more serene than the mortal atom that breathed beneath them.

“The morning of the ninth dawned fairly, and found me in right humour for the usual refreshing ceremonies. A letter or two had arrived, and when I had taken them up, my eye wandered again, of its own accord, over the table, and then to the chimney-piece, and round the room; and then I sat down to look at last night’s Parliamentary debate, which did seem that morning particularly uninteresting.

“Reading and sipping disposed of the time, writing got rid of more, and a few gay brisk turns about the room for the sake of exercise, added another half hour to the past. The postman’s knock—the postman’s—suddenly checked this carpet excursion, and I stepped in the middle of the room a minute, the ear bent downwards to listen. My figure was before me in the glass between the windows; the attitude, the anxious turn of the eye as I caught the reflection, quite startled me for an instant—not longer. I listened no more, but repaired to the window, just in time to catch a view of the postman, moving machine-like towards the opposite

house. There was no step upon the stairs—no ; consequently he had left nothing for me.

“What a packet of letters he held secured under that slip-knot ! many more missives than usual—oh ! how many—and several were large. One that he delivered close by had four blue stamps upon it. What might *that* contain ! With what untrembling hands he had given it in ! and yet my own trembled nervously, with a strange desire to have it between my fingers. It was an absurd feeling with which I watched his movements from house to house, and saw letter after letter delivered. I would have given anything at the moment for permission and power to seize that packet from his hands, to loosen the string, to examine the directions one by one, to scrutinise the handwriting, to inspect with burning eyes, the close, hard, unmelting seals—to tear them all open, and read them at a glance.

“Laughing heartily—aloud—at this wild fancy, I sat down calmly to read. Quite calmly, my friend, and with the richest enjoyment as I proceeded. I read Swift’s *Battle of the Books*, with exquisite relish, and I thought I never could have read it before. A knock at the door now and then disturbed me, but only for a minute ; I took but slight heed of such interruptions. From visitors I was secured, being ‘out’ to everybody for three days.

“The day, as it advanced, became misty and cold. This was an evil easily remedied ; it brought me even an advantage in the cheerful companionship of a fire.

“‘The postman had no letter for me ?’ I inquired of the girl who lit it.

“‘None.’

“‘Nobody had called ?’

“‘Nobody whatever.’

“The same story was repeated when dinner was

served; but I enjoyed my dinner, which I had ordered with some tendency to the extravagant. It was beyond my mark, rather ridiculously so; and demanded the crowning adornment of one of the last bottles of a delicious little store—a gift—which I had never until now tasted alone. Solitude is fatal to true wine-drinking, and yet that nectar was never so divine before. I drank to the health of a certain friend of mine, to the health of his family, and nodding as though he sat opposite, cried—

“ ‘ Ah! when that packet has arrived, and the merry flames have consumed the letters, envelopes and all, what a libation we will pour to the immortal gods, old boy!’ ”

“ The evening set in cheerlessly, almost threateningly, and required, for the effectual shutting out of apprehensions and forebodings, infinitely more dreary than the night, a vigorous application to the cigar and the book. The postman came once; the servant mounted hastily up the stairs, and spilling the contents of my tumbler in the eager stretching forth of my feverish hand, I received an obliging circular. A parcel was left, brought up to me at once by special orders, and then cast down to be trampled on; it was a waistcoat that had been altered. No other arrivals. Every summons, for tea, for coals, for hot water—for nothing—afforded the same opportunity for the question —

“ ‘ Any one called? Anything left?’ ”

“ And the same ‘ nobody’ and ‘ nothing’ constituted the reply.

“ Two days were past. ‘ Before the expiration of *three* days,’ the documents of which I had been defrauded, were to be mine! And now the third day had dawned.

“ A spirit of confidence, a faith in that ‘ soul of good-



ness which is in things evil,' an exercise of the reason in waiting not impatiently for that which might yet come in time, and the unconquered power of the will when all else failed, had borne me up in tolerable composure—broken, to be sure, by fits of passion, and by excitement natural to me under far less formidable circumstances—for two days ; two calmer days, following many feverish ones of rage, exertion, anguish, hope, despondency. The depression that came with the close of the second day, the sense of bitter injury and helpless disappointment, had suggested a trial of other stimulants than hope and reason can always proffer to the patient ; and liquid fire had been poured into the blood and upon the brain, in a stream that should have laid the faculties of nature prostrate, and exhibited to the eye of the morning a being to whom its wakeful, balmy, freshening light was wholly lost, or seen only with a painful and sickly vision.

“But this was not so. I was up soon after daybreak, cool, calm, thoughtful, hopeful even ; prepared to meditate, to weigh probabilities, and to await the issue. On neither of the mornings had I experienced such content ; such a feeling of patience lightened by hope, as the valleys of earth are gilded at length by the all-penetrating sunbeams.

“No sunbeam, however, was visible on the desolate morning of the tenth. The heaviest, densest fogs of winter had stolen upon the green and lovely world many weeks before their time ; and if gaiety was to be found anywhere on that day, it must be sought within the mind.

“No letters, no message that morning. Very well.

“Having concluded a protracted meal, I drew my chair round to the fire, and began to ruminate on the posture of affairs. All the circumstances of the case

were fairly and dispassionately passed in review. My adversaries were villains of the worst dye, and no means of compassing their ends were too dishonourable for them to employ. I had so far placed confidence in them as to disarm at their suggestion, and thus to remove an engine which they might reasonably deem perilous, although I knew it to be merely a hollow menace—a fine horse-pistol not loaded. This, too, I had done on the faith of an oracular announcement: trusting to the anonymous pledge of restitution within three days.

“But then I saw as calmly *why* this guarded and mysterious course had been taken, and why the same craven fears and miserable self-interest which dictated the promise would also compel the keeping of it. There was no good cause, then, for apprehension or despondency yet. The time agreed upon had not expired—only two of the three days. This was the last. The last!—ay, verily; for if before the next dawn those letters came not back to me, they would arrive too late; they would be waste and worthless whenever recovered; the cruel, needless mischief would be effected; and a cold, heavy shadow of suspicion and misery would have fallen, never to be chased away, upon happy and innocent lives, valued and loved almost like my own.

“The consultation with myself being now over, I sought exercise and bodily relief in walking about the room, varying the direction occasionally, but preserving a regular pace for a long time; stopping when steps in the street seemed to pause at the door; and, whenever a knock was heard, opening the door of my room to know what had happened. Then my walk would be renewed.

“Gradually this measured pace grew quicker, my strides less regular, my hands clutched at various things

as I passed them, and tapped the wainscot when I went near it. My arms took a swinging motion, and my whole body swung indeed, pendulum fashion, as I walked.

“A sympathy with the large old clock below, which I could plainly hear strike, seemed suddenly to possess me; an intense sympathy it became, and then it grew malicious. I could have found some pleasure in winding it up, in stopping it, and then setting it going again; in putting it back, and swinging the great weights about; and as its loud, sharp, continuous tones one, two, three, striking the hour, rung up the stairs, and seemed to fill the apartment with sound, they so smote upon some chord of the mind that I could not forbear imitating the sounds in a kind of savage and impatient mockery of them.

“There was a piano in the room; never opened, for you know I can’t tell one key from another. But now I sat down before the instrument (little was there, my friend, of merriment or music in me at that anxious moment), and ran my hands along it artlessly, to and fro, in any direction, making discordant noises, until I felt as though the cool smooth ivory had become hot and blistering to my fingers; when with a crash that brought up an inquiry from below, I closed the piano.

“‘Nothing is the matter,’ I said. ‘Any letter, any packet, any message, any card, any visiter whatever?’ Nothing, nobody.

“Out-of-door objects looked no brighter than before; but throwing up the sash, I leaned upon the window-sill, and through the thickening fog scanned the faces of all who approached the house, or seemed likely, from the direction they came in, to call. But they all passed on; the hour stole slowly away, minute by minute; and I then sat down, placing my watch on the table to

look at it, and brood upon the imperceptible motion of that apparently fixed hour-hand, which, nevertheless, travelled so fast.

Long, long I looked; and yet the time so occupied was but half-an-hour; a half-hour of forced calm, during which a fierce tempest of emotion had been raging in my soul, more violently because controlled and shut within. My eye had never wandered from the watch, my reckoning was never once broken, but the seconds were faithfully counted as they passed—and all that long, gloomy, horrid interval measured but half-an-hour; all that anxiety, fear, anguish, torture, that suffering dreadful as any that crime can undergo, was crowded into thirty minutes.

“How many hours of the allotted three days remained yet unexpired? Several, yet very few; a time almost too short for hope; and yet an age, if measured by the torments of suspense.

“Sudden and impetuous movements, or forced and painful quietude, varied the time; but without rendering me unmindful of one passing moment of it. Rapid turns about the room in every direction, watching from the window as long as any creature in the shape of mortal messenger could be seen approaching, piling coals upon the fire, and hurrying to the staircase—sometimes half-down it, sometimes to the bottom, to the door, when any one knocked at it—then returning to drink large draughts of water, but eating nothing—holding the chair into which I had flung myself, very tight, as if by that muscular effort to control the restless mind, and retain myself in the seat;—these were the chief changes in my condition, as the day died, and the cold, black, bitter evening came on.

“I sat in front of a large fire, my head bent over a book, on the small-print pages of which the blaze shone.



I was not reading a word ; but merely counting how many letters there were in a page. As I looked into the fire, forms of picturesque beauty and wild distortion met my view ; and, amidst a crowd of images formed by the bright cinders, I discerned the figure of *Mirabel*—the very likeness of Charles Kemble in former days—smiling amidst the horrid tortures of suspense, and masking agony with easy politeness, as the cut-throats crowded about him. I saw the whole scene beautifully acted in fire, and felt it in my brain.

“Time dragged wearily and painfully. Removing from my finger a small piece of skin, I cut the flesh away with it, almost unwarned by any sensation of pain. I pared my finger-nails, for the sake of doing something, no matter what, to the very quick, and the blood started all round the tips. And then I flew to the window where all was dark, not to look out now, but to listen to footsteps.

“An interval of calm, however, there was. I reasoned in favour of the remaining time. Time there yet was for the restoration of the packet, and the security of those dear to me. Yes, I again persuaded myself that there was hope, high hope ; the compact had not been violated ; and dark as the long day had been, the midnight might yet look golden as a summer’s noon.

“Silence followed, and the semblance of repose ; but after some time the hush became absolutely intolerable, and feebly breaking through it, I could plainly hear the low ticking of the clock at a distance below stairs, which I had never heard before. It disturbed me. Had it been loud, sharp, it might have been unnoticed or easily borne ; but it distressed me by its deadness and monotony. It was a sound of ill-omen, and announced momentarily that my hopes were perishing. Every tick seemed to tell me that my life-blood was oozing away

drop by drop at a time—one drop for each audible tick. I could bear it no longer.

“There was a crash of glass—how I caused it—and with what—I hardly know; but the act, the sound, was a welcome and indispensable relief. The next volley of discords, if less startling, was even more stunning than the first. The new crash came from the piano, all the powers of which I pressed into the service with a kind of frantic and yet solemn glee, to drown the dull, small ticking that had almost driven me mad.

“Utterly unconscious of anything save the noises thus created, and the impossibility of hearing all other sounds still more intolerable, I continued this experiment, it might be for a minute, or for an hour, or for a day. I had lost all power to reckon time. When just as the insane dashing and crashing of all the discords into one extraordinary combination had attained its height, the door was opened—though I heard no sound at all.

“The loud double knock below had been unheard; the clatter of the maiden-messenger rushing up the stairs had been unheard; nay, her shrill exclamation beneficently set up within a few inches of my ear,

—“‘Sir, here’s the packet!’—

“Even this had been entirely unheard for the exact period of two seconds; but ere the third second had fled, I could have clasped her to my heart, or trebled her wages, to atone for my neglect and insensibility.

“Oh, packet invaluable! My lost treasure restored! How soon after that Long Day my heart grew young again, though my head has been twenty years older—I mean the gray outside of it—ever since!”

These Long Days, which are the common lot, custom (the sure and silent alleviator of every ill that is inevitable and must be borne) so far shortens, as by slow degrees to adapt the burden to the power of endurance.

The heavy task of yesterday seems lighter to-day ; distance lessens when the eye, grown familiar with it, learns to measure its extent ; we find the two-mile walk to our own dwelling, stretched into three or four when we are travelling on an unknown road to the house of the stranger.

The long, dull, weary day of factory-labour, restless, vigilant, and incessant, gathers, nevertheless, with a less grievous weight, hour by hour, upon the overtaxed heart, than would the slow and lengthening minutes of the morrow, if on that sunless day the father saw his children, spared from grinding toil, pining with hunger. The day devoted to watchful tending by the bed of pain, when the being we most deeply revere is helpless, prostrate, and in peril—wears out less darkly than the fixed and hopeless monotony of the after-day, when such tending is needed no more. Short and merry is the long sad time, from early morn to noon, from eve into deep midnight, passed on the becalmed sea by the impatient heart-sick mariner, compared with that *one* day—that new, long, marvellous lifetime, sweet, and yet most horrible to bear—when the sunrise sees him sole survivor of the wreck, and the sunset leaves him hanging to a wave-washed point, or floating on a spar, alone and in the dark between sea and sky.

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“ FAULTS ON BOTH SIDES :”

THE OLD STORY.

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“FAULTS on both sides” is a verdict delivered sixty million times in every second, from the jury-box of society.

As Everybody in these days can see occasion, and that

pretty frequently, to cast grave censure and cutting ridicule upon the classes from which juries are selected, it might reasonably be supposed that juries are not chosen from the classes to which Everybody belongs. It happens, however, that law and justice, when in quest of jurymen, are obliged to go for them to that multitudinous person, the public in general; and it follows, therefore, that people who lash or laugh at juries, are the severest self-censurers, and bitter satirists at their own cost. So with ourselves, and so be it.

Certain it is, that at this instant, in the honest city we reside in, juries are, to say the least, as unpopular as at Botany Bay; and this unpopularity as regularly increases as population does in the penal settlements. We who have unsullied characters, who abjure every vice that is unlawful, and who live in the practice of every virtue that is agreeable to our constitutions, all under the protection of the jury-box, rail as loudly at juries, as the rascals of whom juries rid us.

But then how nicely we discriminate—with what a fine and delicate hand we draw the line between (as we may say) the box and its twelve tenants. How philosophically we distinguish between the jury and the juryism, between the practice and the principle. While we bully the “honest and intelligent” dozen as often as we please; how rapturously we, on every occasion, extol the system. The blockheads assembled in the box are only not knaves and perjurers, because they are dense fools, or dreamers past waking; but the box itself is all the while religiously held to be a blessing invaluable.

An Englishman may just as well poison his grandmother, as rail at trial by jury. No false indictment was ever torn to pieces in the face of the world, under a jury’s unerring and beneficent auspices, as that free-



born Briton would be who should dare to whisper in any popular assembly a syllable disparaging to that glorious institution. To hint that it is less than perfect, is to incur moral expatriation: the blackest criminals would cut you when you went up to give evidence in their favour. Indeed, the very worst offenders have been known to declare that if they could not be tried by a jury of their country, they would rather not be tried at all.

Yet it must be admitted that there is an argument which ought, and, but for an apparently instinctive prejudice in favour of trial by jury, *must* prevail, especially among the class last adverted to. Since, if the strict and faultless rule of justice is understood to assert, that a man can only be truly tried when he is tried by his peers, it follows that a prisoner who has once been convicted, should, when arraigned a second time, be tried by a jury of convicts. Every man is deemed innocent until proved guilty; bright, unwritten maxim making written laws look oftentimes dark; hence twelve honest men to try the accused. But when the prisoner at the bar happens to be an unfortunate who has once before been found guilty of robbery, ought there not—in fairness—to be twelve thieves in the jury-box to try him?

It speaks volumes (large and numerous as the statutes themselves), for the love and veneration in which trial by jury is held by all classes of our countrymen, that the advocacy of such a principle of impartiality as this might be just as securely ventured upon in either house of legislature, as in a meeting of the swell-mob, however “numerous and influential.” The very prisoners would kick the asserter of such a privilege out of Newgate. Picking oakum constitutes no paradise, would be their natural exclamation as human beings; but, as English-

men in particular, they would as naturally add, don't tamper with trial by jury!

Such is the infatuation, such at least is the enthusiastic reverence, which, in some quarters, is known to exist for this great feature of our laws, that certain philosophers, moving in the innermost circles of enlightenment, have been disposed to doubt whether the total abolition of crime, and the sudden ceasing of all legislation throughout the land, would be a desideratum; whether it would prove an unmixed good, an always salutary blessing; seeing that it would, of necessity, throw into abeyance, and virtually consign to silent oblivion, the practice of trial by jury.

But on the other hand, it is a matter still held in dispute by some refined speculators in philosophy, whether such an institution, so valued by all ranks of the people—those who have been found guilty, as well as those who have never been found innocent, though they are charitably supposed to be so—may not, by virtue of its very excellence, possess the most insidiously mischievous influences: may not, by the purity of its principle, excite to just so much corruption as serves to put the all-preserving instrument in action.

“Where are you hurrying?” said I, to a scampering acquaintance last week.

“On a friendly errand,” was the reply. “An old school-fellow, who has done me many a good turn, has just set up in business, and, however costly to myself, I can't help patronising him at starting.”

“I see; a jeweller perhaps; and a trinket or two for—”

“Oh, no, nothing of the kind. Dabbs is a dentist; but one *must* give him a lift, you know, and so I shall go and have a tooth taken out! They're all devilish sound, and I'm only afraid, as he's inexperienced, it may try his powers.”

Reasoning upon a similar principle, philosophers of a refined temperament have feared, most groundlessly, that the institution alluded to has, on some occasions, been set at work solely by the impulse of a patriotic desire to see it in operation; that some ardent and admiring natures, contemplating its moral grandeur, may have said, “ How sublime is this engine of justice, how perfect the fairness which is its foundation and also its essence ! It is but to commit a felony, to experience its happy and equal working. Here goes !”

But all such objections are buried in a speechless depth, deeper than that wherein *Prospero* drowned his book. No moralist, no philosopher, no law-reformer, no Young-Englandite, even in the present flush and glory of his daring, dare dream of giving utterance to the least irreverential of such scruples. To cast a slur upon the jury-box, is to stand condemned at the bar without trial at all.

“ What a deal of nonsense now,” said George III., “ there is in Shakspeare ; what sad stuff, shocking stuff, eh ? Yes, yes—to be sure there is ; but one mustn’t say so, one mustn’t say so.”

That monarch was not perhaps a very profound critic, and might not see all things precisely as Shakspeare saw them ; but there is something in his remark that may admit occasionally of no unuseful application.

In exact proportion to the idolatrous pride with which we contemplate the jury principle, is the licence we allow ourselves in impugning, deriding, and picking to pieces the judgments of the jurors in whose persons it is represented. In like manner, there are good orthodox people who would die at the stake for the church, but who never leave off abusing parsons the whole year round. You may bring in what verdict you like against a jury. You cannot be too unjust for the popular taste.

They are the only people in court who can be run down with impunity, and are despised in the very teeth of the sanctity with which the office they fill is regarded. Attack the judge, however mildly ; and somebody in whose favour he once summed up, will gratefully interpose in his behalf. Abuse the counsel, and the whole ferocious pack will fasten on you at once ! Bully the plaintiff, and the defendant's friends may screen you from his rage. Condemn the defendant unheard, and the plaintiff's partisans are bound to protect you. Insult the witnesses, and some of them will take their own part, or the judge will interfere to spare them.

But the jurymen are all your own—the whole defenceless twelve. They alone are without shield or protection. For them, no man, however chivalrous his nature, feels called upon to stand up. It is nobody's business to see a jury righted ; at best, the verdict in their case would be “justifiable ill-usage.”

They are called “honest and intelligent” by courtesy, but the words mean no more than “honourable” before “member.” If they follow the judge's dictation, they are handsomely pronounced to be servile, spiritless, and foresworn ; if they happen to differ with that learned person, and bring in a verdict contrary to his intelligible direction, they are pretty sure to be self-willed, prejudiced, ignorant, and reckless of law and evidence. If they come to a decision instantaneously, the decision, though right, is farcical for want of deliberation ; if they have conscientious scruples and cannot agree, we lock them up and starve them into unanimity ; thus obtaining a verdict, not by the strength of their understandings and the purity of their consciences, but by physical torture and the exhaustion of their animal powers. In a question of life or death, we force a decree, ay or no, not from the brain, but from the



stomach. We detain them from their homes, to the injury or ruin of their business, for days together, jamming them up in the Old Baileys of this world, to try scores of wretched cases that should have been settled elsewhere—and then we make them a legal offer of elevenpence.

Looking at all which the judge has to learn, to sacrifice, and to endure in the performance of his great functions, we may scarcely envy him the dignity and reward of his elevation. A counsel with ten thousand a-year, seems somebody; but he works horribly hard, lives in strife and storm all his days, forfeits too often, with sweet serenity of thought, all delicacy of taste, and is sometimes obliged to defend villany and serve a rascal at a good man's cost. Witnesses, standing conspicuously to be baited with their mouths sewn up, are in no enviable position; and to be a plaintiff, is to find out frequently the misery of being in the right, and the ruin that attends on victory; to be the prisoner at the bar never can be pleasant:—Yet to be this, or anything, is preferable a thousand times over to being on the jury.

In revenge for all these slight hardships and injuries, in sweet and safe revenge, we see juries laying their heads together to generate verdicts on the “serve him right” principle—verdicts of flat burglary in perjury-cases, and of “guilty, but with innocent intentions,” in a case of deliberate shooting through the head. Where freaks like these, which are now so continually witnessed, and which suggest recollections rather of Jack-in-the-box than the Jury there,—happen to be not directly prompted by a spirit of sly malicious revenge, they owe their origin most probably to one of two considerations. The first is, that as the jurymen are a portion of general society, it is their duty and

interest to vindicate the views of general society in relation to jurymen as far as they can; and the second is, that as the principle of trial by jury is so deeply rooted in the pride and affection of the nation, no fantastic tricks on the part of a few dozen dolts and drolls in the jury-box can weaken its influence, or bring it into even momentary contempt.

But we are now to look at jurymen *out* of the box: to see them serving unsummoned, delivering volunteer-verdicts, and dispensing decrees of "guilty" or "not guilty" in every case they can pry into, without the lightest scruple of conscience, the smallest degree of deliberation, or an atom of moral responsibility.

Take the first dozen people who come—they may be said to have been born jurymen; they have been jurors at least from childhood, and the very cradle was a preparatory box in which they learned the useful art of sleeping. The first habit they acquired was, the habit of giving verdicts. They were never sworn to well and truly try, and try they did not; but they gave a verdict as soon as they could talk, and as often as they could find a case. They have been doing it ever since. They do it daily, hourly, and for ever. We are a nation of jurors. Every dinner-table and every sofa, every kitchen, parlour, and gossip-corner is a jury-box, where the verdicts are pronounced agreeably to the same law of chance that governs the dice-box.

Now, the sworn juries, as we have seen, often mistake black for white, in the most whimsical spirit of contradiction that ever astonished a prisoner or amused the lookers-on. They do contrive to see most ingeniously sundry invisible points, and to overlook at the same time the most staring facts in the world. In one respect, juries are always to be relied on, and it is this:—if there *be* a way to go wrong, they will take it.

It would appear not unfrequently, that there are subjects of doubt and difficulty, specially reserved by some mysterious law, to puzzle persons sitting on a jury, but utterly incapable of perplexing any other samples of curious humanity.

But of course it happens that they sometimes stumble on the truth. A man who is always guessing, will guess rightly now and then ; and the system of heads and tails, fairly managed, will turn up once in a way in favour of justice. Besides, their conclusions, when erroneous, are only injurious to one of two parties ; for although juries may have been known before now to come into court with a verdict of “guilty against the prosecutor,” yet they are in no part of the country in the habit of finding both prosecutor and prisoner guilty at the same time.

Now herein are they miracles of even-handed and harmonious justice, compared with the figures they cut *out* of the jury-box. In common daily life, where they appear in the character of irresponsible jurymen, a mere verdict of guilty against the wrong person is not always sufficient to satisfy their sweeping love of justice. They must have double verdicts : condemnatory of plaintiff and defendant too. Justice, in fine, must bear a two-edged sword, and cut both ways, right and wrong. Hence the favourite verdict, wherever “Society” holds her court : “there are faults on both sides.”

No phrase could be invented with a fairer face, stern, but just ; it has an air of perfect impartiality ; it has a sound like the language of the gods decreeing strictly and severely between man and man—or between man and woman. It rings through the depths of the convinced and humbled soul, a profound, admitted, unanswerable truth. It seems to apply to every subject—and to all persons. The universal unconcealable in-

firmity of human nature stamps it with fitness, and insures it currency. It appears to contain the secret history of every national, every domestic contest. It includes the philosophy of every struggle of party, every squabble of sectarianism, every polite shindy upstairs, every row in the scullery.

"There are faults on both sides:" in Eve as in Adam. How cutting the verdict, and how apparently just and appropriate, cut where it will! How wide the sweep it seems to take, wherever the principles of human action, and the habits of human life, happen to be in play.

"Faults on both sides!" It does, at the first blush, appear to be unexceptionable in its painful but dispassionate impartiality. It takes in the Before and After—the public and the private character, the inner man and the outward. It might be written over the door of Newgate, and on the gate that gives entrance to the pulpit. Broad as is the line that separates the ermined judge from the rope-bound criminal, it becomes narrowed, as we reflect upon it, to this small sentence—"there are faults on both sides."

In the nursery, where the little refractory one wears out parental patience, and tortures affection into anger, the words should be written; and formed of roses in the bower where gentle lovers quarrel spitefully, they might have a fragrant influence. They should be seen in large legible array over the matrimonial chimney-piece; the miserly senior might remember them when pinching his spendthrift grandson; and the fine, indolent, scent-inhaling lady when discharging her giddy, soap-forgetting maid.

In all houses of legislation, they should be written over the Speaker's chair, as applicable to every excess of opposition or ministerialism. "Faults on both sides"



might apply to many a man's coat, both before and after he had turned it: to many a vote, whether rescinded or confirmed. “Faults on both sides” should serve as motto to many a confident and searching criticism; and actors might not fare the worse if the audience could see the words inscribed over the stage-curtain, whose two sides are so very different. Reading them by a philosophic light, there is no class or condition of humanity, acting as each necessarily does, upon the existence and state of another, to which they are without application. Nay, there can hardly be two individual forms of human life, brought either into collision or into union, where these words would be inappropriate or unexplanatory. Only upon a coffin-lid could the conscious moralist see the inscription, “faults on both sides,” misplaced and meaningless.

Yet how are sacred things profaned, and the sweetest uses of poetry perverted to the lowest and falsest ends. This very phrase, which seems to hold in the narrowest compass the moral of all life, and to convey the verdict agreed upon by Truth, the plain-speaker, and Philosophy, the oracle, in relation to all the vain and aggravated contentions of mankind—this phrase is made a catch-word, a slang-saying, a jest, becoming in the very meanest mouths, and fitted for the vilest objects.

There is no form of words which has worked more mischief in the social world, as far as words alone can work it, than this simple phrase. It is caught up from lip to lip, repeated until sense is lost in mere sound, and the general truth becomes a particular falsehood in thousands of instances. Its real meaning is struck out, and a hollow lie is substituted. Where we should find the white sweet kernel, the maggot fattens. “Faults on both sides” is the language, not of the philosopher, the moralist, the peace-making, pardoning Christian;

but of the self-elected juror, the concealed and cowardly slanderer, the heartless and abandoned leveller, who would confound vice with virtue, and merge all distinctions, not merely of guilt, but of guilt and innocence, in a loose, easy, general, comfortable verdict—a safe one universally—"faults on both sides."

"You are not far from the truth there," is the cry of the sage babblers of society as often as this verdict is delivered. Not very, in one sense; but awfully near a lie, dark and silent as assassination perhaps, in another sense. A reputation is possibly sacrificed in the very utterance of the words; a life's life may be destroyed; a great cause, sacred as virtue, is given up at once; the broadest, simplest points of difference are confused and merged uninquiringly, and honour and shame reduced to the same measure, colour, and substance;—all by the easy current verdict, applicable to the most difficult and the most contradictory cases, "there are faults on both sides."

The Father of Evil never invented a more dexterous weapon for his agents to work with; the envenomed point is so concealed, while it looks so open and fair. Candour so shines in it, that inquiry is subdued at once. Remonstrance is silenced by a text so impartial. Once utter this decree, and there is no more to be said. "There are faults on both sides," generally settles all to everybody's satisfaction.

The lovers of peace are satisfied, for it cuts short the dispute. The sympathisers with virtue submit, for it spares her the dangerous intoxication of a triumph. The allies of the vicious are comforted, for their client is lifted up in repute to the virtuous level. The slanderers exult, because it gives them a cue for reviling both parties. The timid, selfish people are reconciled, for they are relieved from the risk of taking part one

way or the other. The indolent are saved the trouble of investigating. The hypocrites admit that there may be possibly a fault or so more on one side than on the other, but protest vehemently against the practice of balancing hairs, and re-opening cases that are finally settled. The verdict is given : there is no new trial to be had, when once human nature has heard the decree pronounced, “ there are faults on both sides.”

Terms, these, so pleasant to the ears of self-love, of malignity, of ignorance, and of mere idleness, as never to fall without effect. Society—as we call the otherwise nameless monster that infests the more populous places of civilised life—is, when engaged in discussion upon points of dispute between two of its members, but too often as a jury assembled to cast plaintiff and defendant equally in heavy damages. How can we expect the jury-box of the law to be otherwise supplied than it is, when we are thus witnesses of the habits prevalent among the irresponsible jurors who compose the classes from which the supply is drawn ?

When we count twelve persons into a jury-box to discharge a great and solemn duty ; persons of whom we know nothing but what may be conveyed in the proclamation of their names, but who are silent and submissive, plain-looking evidently, and most likely sober ; we at once want them to be watchful, honest, acute—nay, wise, dispassionate, just—most just, and yet merciful—endowed, in short, with all rare excellences, intellectual and moral ; the rarest being good-sense, on their stock of which quality, the most perilous and bewildering assaults will surely be made in speeches by counsel an hour long. All this we desire them to be ; all this we insist on their being ; they are nothing if less.

Have we ever bestowed a thought on what they were

before they stepped into the box!—how they have discharged their duties as self-constituted jurors in society, from the pinafore period to the era of baldness!—what false judgments they have given every day of their lives on the clearest evidence, and what verdicts they are in the habit of delivering without hearing any evidence at all! No, we have not thought about these things; but we quietly assume that there is some virtue in the box itself, some sudden magic by which they are rendered on the instant, acute, watchful, honest—very wise, dispassionate, and just—most just; but merciful, notwithstanding.

Only yesterday, the good people—each of them in his district—brought in a verdict of “faults on both sides,” simply to avoid, by a short cut, the bore of inquiring into the rights of a matter, and at the same time the awkwardness of having no opinion respecting it, when Mrs. Clack called. They did the same the day before, perhaps; and, it may be six times last week. It is habitual with them.

What fitness for a right discharge of the duties of a juror, conscientiously and impartially, have they ever shown by their habits as citizens, and their cultivation of the modes and usages of “Society,” which never yet got hold of a case without making the worst of it! In fact, there are but three sorts of people to be found in it: those who always take the strong side, those who espouse the weaker cause with the view of surrendering it, and those who, with a worse treachery, pretend to balance and compare, and find both bad. The first loudly declares that Sir John’s conduct has been that of a high-minded gentleman, and an affectionate relation, towards a brother who ought to have been sent to the hulks; the second as fiercely swears that Sir John has acted like a brute and a bully to a mild and gentle



relative, who had merely helped himself after all to a little of the family property ; and the third with quieter emphasis, deplores all the features of the case as one of the very blackest he ever investigated, adding, that both brothers would experience boundless mercy in the sentence of a month at the treadmill. The last juror creates converts in the proportion of three to one, because, not being troubled with a knowledge of the facts, he can make out a strong case.

Facts are disgusting things to a self-constituted jury. When old Swill (he is only forty-one, but he drinks at the rate of three years to a twelvemonth) was parted from the pretty little martyr, his wife (who married him only to show how she could bear injuries instead of children) ; a jury of the town, while yet there was no information before them, decided unanimously that he was a savage ; but presently, when all the facts of the case came out, establishing the perfect justice of that verdict, half the jury turned round and tried to disprove the facts, seeking to vindicate the guilty by the old trick of vilifying the innocent ; in the end, the majority, with the proofs before them, exhibiting the black here and the white there, pronounced the final decree, " a bad case, and there were faults on both sides !" It ended all perplexities, and seemed so very fair. Poor silent lady, sinned against, not sinning. But everybody is quite satisfied that " there are faults on both sides."

Ayrton's household crisis occurred about the same time : luckless Ayrton, who married anything but a martyr, and died in what may be not inaccurately designated tartardom. When he escaped from his tigress he never disclosed the horrors of the matrimonial jungle. No word of complaint, of disparagement, of unkindness, escaped his lips ; he sought no justification, no revenge ; it was enough that they were parted.

Tenderness towards his children, a proud self-respect at least, prompted him to bury his wrongs, to bear all calumnies, to endure every unjust and malicious aspersion, rather than be forced into a contest of words, the bitterness of which is lasting, while the excitement is but momentary. In this case, then, the jury had no facts on one side; but what did they care for that! Criminating the wife, there rose, self-multiplied, a huge pile of facts—it was but to divide them fairly and frankly into two equal piles, and lay them at the separate doors of the parted pair. A wronged indignant spirit had scorned to defend himself; and the honest, conscientious world, interpreting the silence in its own way, did not scruple to shake its head, and pronounce this to be one of those cases in which nothing can possibly be said—there were such flagrant “faults on both sides.”

Yes, there were honour and dishonour, truth and falsehood, forbearance and ferocity, contrasted in the affair; perfect nobleness, with the meanest and most selfish of vices; yet candour, loving its convenient balance, and abjuring all disproportionate measurements, gave the old cue to the frank-dealing multitude—“Sad business; shocking events; very black one way, and no whiter the other. Faults on both sides, my dear sir!”

An avowed and inveterate partisan may be tolerated. Where he takes up an affair, not with any interest about the point of truth involved in it, but simply in championship of one of the parties to the suit, he wears a plain, bold, intelligible front. The harm he may do is at once discoverable, and from what he says we know how much to deduct. But of all social nuisances and abominations, that is least to be endured, which works in him who assumes the office—not of the advocate,

but the judge—who takes no side, runs into no rhapsody, who seems to scan with equal eye the two scales, and simply by protesting that there is arrant knavery in both, passes in the world as the possessor of unbiassed judgment and inflexible principle. He has belonged to neither of the two parties, but having cast a censure upon both, he is deemed a man of moderate views and calm passions.

There is sometimes no monster in the moral world more dangerous than your moderate man. He will neither retreat nor advance, but stands in the way till the roaring engine rushes over him. He blocks up the staircase when the house is on fire, and attracts everybody to the point of greatest danger; because he is known to be moderate, and never runs into extremes; the extremes being, the trap in the roof above, and the open door below.

It is this pretended moderation that overlooks the real merits of a cause, and whether from malice, impudence, or mere indolence, pronounces the verdict which confounds the oppressed with the oppressor; and while it passes censure upon offending power, insures it impunity by declaring that the weakness it trampled on was equally in fault. In ordinary life, indolence, mere indolence, is the spring of the evil; for there the readiest is the best judgment.

A. is established in the world at a considerable elevation, and to all eyes is prosperous. Z., a tiny understrapper, at the bottom of the ladder, is tempted to climb up a little way, and is handsomely assisted in his course, just high enough to bear A.'s responsibilities, when he is crushed beneath them, as per plan laid down from the beginning. This is merely a little transaction between knave and fool; but the world always softens the verdict to the knave, for it is simply of opinion that there were “faults on both sides!”

The simple child is ensnared to her ruin; for the heartless profligate, master of every move that vicious experience could teach, had her fate in his own hands. But he is only regarded as a sharer in the blame; both were in fault; the girl should never have suffered herself to be enticed from the path of innocence. So speaks cold worldly justice.

An only son, too much beloved, reared in tenderness that anticipated every want, and fed even imaginary ones, plunged headlong into crime, and in the delirium of dissipation, stripped a father, by a forged deed, of the last support of his age—the sole means of sustaining for a while the broken life that already drooped towards the coffin. What was the verdict of the enlightened jury, Society? That it was a black act, but that both were in the wrong—son and father—for how that fond father once indulged his boy! Here too, then, there "were faults on both sides!" the grand fact, and the only one, that stared all candid people in the face.

When that foolish philanthropist, Gaddy, returning home at night, wrapped up in his good nature, sees a gentleman overtaken by wine and ruffians, he darts off to his relief, is brought into horizontal communication with the kennel, loses his hat, receives a smart contusion on the temple, protects the incapable however at the risk of life, conducts him to a place of safety, and is then given into custody by the jolly dog he has delivered, on a charge of stealing his gold watch: he is then locked up until morning, sends for a hat, a surgeon, and a lawyer, and appears before a magistrate: when—the jolly dog having by this time discovered that he had left his gold watch safe at home—Gaddy is discharged with a handsome explanatory remark from the bench, that there appear to have been "faults on both sides."

So said they, too, in your case, LYDDIE ERLE—even



this, and no more! What note takes mankind of tragedies, if they happen to be real!

Lyddie Erle's sacrifices began in early childhood. They were all joyfully made for a brother, her fellow orphan and sole companion, whom, as long as she could remember, she idolized; and who, even in those giddy, boyish days, when the heart is most happy and generous, was ungrateful, selfish, and tyrannical. She was bright-minded as well as affectionate, and though two years younger than himself, learned Latin, it was said, solely for the delight of doing his exercises for him when he happened to be idle or in a scrape. With the management that belongs to maturer years, she extricated him from all difficulties—things in which he had a wonderful faculty for getting entangled; gave him the best of advice, which he did not take, and the prettiest watches and purses with gold coins in them, which he did; set every bit of his bad conduct right with inquisitive friends, and made, as he said, "all straight," without any crooked dealing at all.

She was the star of his life, a redeeming spirit, a sleepless angel snatching him from all harm. But go wrong he would. However, when minor sacrifices were at an end, larger ones were ready. The debts he had contracted she provided for out of her scanty portion—a third of what his had been; and when he returned to her in wild passion, the money spent, and the debts not paid, she wept, indeed, for his sake, piteously, but gave the full sum again without a sigh for her own.

A beggar, and with a character, while yet so young, not entirely unblotted, his safety required sacrifices costlier far than gold. Tears and sleepless nights would not purify and save him; but thought, energy, well-directed influence might; and with a head like a sage man, but with an angel's heart, she devoted herself to the task. Warm affection and a firm soul did the work

of sagacity, and experience approved what the mere girl suggested. The enterprise by which her brother was to be advanced to independence, would need but part—not *all*—of her remaining store of money. It was but to exercise, for her own support, her skill in languages, and in music, if necessary; it would be a pleasure, not a hardship; self-maintenance would be so easy—and oh! so very, very sweet!

But when this enterprise, so costly to her, but so pregnant with golden promise, fell to the ground with a ruinous crash, through misconduct and recklessness, unexcused now by the plea of ardent, inexperienced youth, the discovery of a new hope and a safer course became painfully difficult. Her own small gains—even if she reserved none of them—would be but the mockery of a supply to one of his extravagant habits; and how speak to him imploringly of a pinching economy, without seeming to reproach him in the hour of his bitterness!

Self, however, will sometimes start a plan where even sympathy like hers is ineffective. The brother of Lyddie Erle was conscious of one thing, which Lyddie Erle could never have thought of; the priceless value of such a sister. Some months before, a sentiment had stolen into her mind favouring the advances of a youth possessed of manifest desert, whose passion spoke more in his silence than in his speech, and yet was unequivocal. In her innocent nature, the little "bud of love" was silently opening to the sunshine, when her brother at once crushed it. The object of it was too noble for him to hold communion with; and besides, he could not afford to give away such a sister to any lover. Soft expostulations, fond assurances, and chiefly, lies foul with detraction, enabled him to stifle the growing prepossession.

Now, however, his view of marriage changed. A

friend of his own, bold, dissolute, and hard-minded, but rich at present, came as a suitor to the startled and blushing Lyddie ; who shrank back terror-stricken at the bare thought. She would have leapt into her brother's heart, had it been open to shelter her ; but it repulsed her, tenderly at first, then sternly, even fiercely, in anger and astonishment at her resistance. But resist with all her gentle and unpolluted blood she must ; she must. His arguments, his passions, could not here prevail—though they shocked and wounded her. He spoke of his own ruined state, his starved hopeless prospects, and Lyddie trembled ; he spoke of the secret uses to which he could turn the rich connexion formed by marriage, of the bright fortune which by certain contrivances it would bring him, and Lyddie shuddered !

Not *that* ! even for the being most beloved by her under heaven ; for him, compared with whom herself was nothing, dust. To give what was yet left of her store, to engage to work with head, heart, and hands, to raise what might be necessary for replacing him in the world, was easy—it was happiness : and to take it, together with the passionate assurances of the wonders her affection was yet to work in his behalf, was to him not difficult, and anything but misery.

People blamed the extravagance, the audacious swagger of the brother, while they extolled him as noble-hearted ; but they blamed more the presumption of poor Lyddie, her want of affection for her relative, her insensibility to his interests, in refusing such a match. “ There were faults,” they said, “ on both sides.”

Trials were at hand that wrung from the girl's heart tears of blood. Not the silent sufferings hourly undergone in slights, injuries, insults, incurred by the anxious, indigent teacher ; in bitter privations, endured rather

than spend the produce of the music-lesson ; of fatigue and misery, only not overwhelming and intolerable, because sustained for his sake ; no, these were light trials—compared with the heavy, awful, life-darkening secret, which had fallen like a huge block of ice upon her soul, and seemed, so chilling and crushing was its influence, to bury her alive.

Lyddie Erle had—had she seen by horrible accident?—had she heard by undesigned or voluntary confession? She had at least, by some means, of which she was mistress by dire mischance, *become aware*, that the beloved of her soul, her idol-brother, to preserve whom spotless it is a weak word to say she would have died—she would have lived in tortures to do it—was even now, past recall, a robber in act, and an assassin in thought.

The rich *roué*, on a marriage-connexion with whom he was to have built his proud, mean fortune, had become his dupe in another way ; and the life of honour, the life of virtue, the life of lofty manhood was in him extinct for ever. What he had once compassed in safety, the tempter brought him, not reluctantly, to try again ; but this time the theft was less securely effected, and Suspicion turned upon the paralysed villain its cold, keen, unsleeping eye ; cold, though full of fiery light, which was ever shaded. He recovered, to repel the accusing spirit of that glance, by a bold, but quiet look ; he hid deep the burning sense for vengeance, the thirst for safety ; waited the dark hour, which his fate told him was sure to come ; and planned the murder, which at the appointed moment, his very poverty (so it turned out) prevented him from executing. A post-chaise would have carried him as far as man could go on the great highway of crime ; ah ! he had at that nick of time no money ; he was too poor (so his fate



willed it) to pay for powder and shot. How he cursed his ill-luck !—how he execrated with bitterness, increased a thousand-fold, his sin-thwarting poverty ! He was without a shilling to buy poison.

But the act committed, and the act intended, both were known to Lyddie. Oh ! the agony of that knowledge. Yet, yet it should be endured, suppressed, nay, stifled ;—or, rather the very knowledge should be cast forth from her mind, and its burning sparks be trodden out into darkness and blank oblivion. Penitence should come at once, and peace after long search be found. Alas ! of what avail this calm in the distant future ! The crimes were known also to the man whose life was to have paid the price of his suspicion of injury.

And yet here—here in the darkest abyss—a light shot up and kindled hope, wild hope and joy, in the heart of the malefactor. He had a sister who could buy him out of a bondage too dreadful too bear. Yes, it was so. The lesser profligate would pardon the greater, and cheat justice. The price was—Lyddie Erle.

Lyddie lived to hear the proposal—then dropped, and a soul untainted by the dust that fell seemed to have risen to heaven. But she again awoke, after long days, to consciousness ; and heard the proposition, painfully, eagerly, madly reiterated. She did not drop now ; but she summoned her reason, and armed her affections for fierce trial. She demonstrated the insanity of the prayer, and pleaded for pity and pardon for her brother. Too soon was she doomed to plead for these *from* him ; for the enraged accuser, foiled in his scheme of sweeter vengeance, had his hand upon that brother’s forfeit life. The end then seemed approaching. Yet something remained for thought and energy to do. She sold, for almost nothing, what drawings she could make in

the night-time; she collected what trifles, might be secured, by giving lessons during the night-like day—happy moral lessons to the young, and merry melodious tasks in music; and with the funds thus drawn together by patient, thoughtful, resolute toil, the accused surrounded himself with the means of defence. This was the holy and loving desire, that kept Lyddie Erle alive. He would have the ablest counsel; he would not be deserted and undone in the desolate time.

What a pang had been thine, fair soul, could thy innocent and truth-speaking spirit have guessed that the gold would have been employed to buy witnesses also! Witnesses!—

God of purity! amidst the false they sought to include the true. With the suborned, they would have ensnared her also to their purpose, who had but one tongue, which was lieless. But Lyddie Erle, they said, could save her brother yet. She had only to step into the witness-box; to give her evidence without wavering or wandering; to prove what no one else could; to establish her brother's innocence, his *innocence*; to rescue him from agony, from ignominy, perhaps from death.

Her brother's innocence!—and *she knew!*—To be proved, established triumphantly by her, who *knew!*—She to be called to give evidence, who, if compelled to speak a word—the thought brought a wild wish for instantaneous and universal darkness; she knew not where to hide herself, lest she should be dragged into the presence where Truth dare not be dumb.

It was in vain that she told them that it was *impossible!*—in vain that she uttered the same words over and over again a hundred times, expressing the one conviction of her soul which it seemed to her childish to repeat, and yet mad not to understand. But they could not understand why it was impossible. She had

but to speak, and yes, one thing more—what so easy? —*to hold her tongue!* Why was it impossible?

And weeks after, when the brother was voyaging through the deep waters in a hideous felon-ship, and Lyddie Erle's grave was being turfed and bordered with spring violets, those who thus decorated her green dwelling, and who, as they thought, knew her well, and loved her too, could not help preaching over it the old world-sermon—the solemnity which familiarity makes ludicrous:

“Beautiful she was, never proud, and always kind to the poor; but she might have spoken up for her brother in his time of need. He was wild, but devoted to his sister. Both had grievous troubles, and both were to blame. THERE WERE FAULTS ON BOTH SIDES!”

## ON CONSIDERING ONESELF HORSEWHIPPED!

IN the annals of private quarrel, or of quarrel between man and man—which is at least as frequent and distinguishing a feature of the personal history of the human race as war is of the history of all nations in all ages—the phrase “consider yourself horsewhipped” figures as a golden maxim; and it is peculiar to the plain injunction which it contains, that it appears to have been, in every instance, implicitly respected and obeyed. Multitudinous as are the examples of its application, and constantly as they are accumulating, there is not on record a single case of non-submissiveness. The injunction carries obedience with it; the smack of the whip is in the words the instant they become audible; and the person whose ear is tingled by them, instinctively feels horsewhipped.

Let this be a settled point at once, or all the superstructure we may raise will fall to the ground. There is no rational doubt that the words have the whip in them. It is of no use to quote Shakspeare—

Oh ! who can hold a fire in his hand

By thinking of the frosty Caucasus !

Shakspeare puts fine truths into some particular mouth which they well become, and we falsify them by the endeavour to give them a universal application ; thus turning his sweet philosophy to sheer folly. Each character of his speaks for itself, and not intentionally for all the world, though this may often happen incidentally. Besides, if unable to protect ourselves from the effects of fire by thinking of frost, that is no proof that we may not feel heat by thinking of fire. And again, if it were such a proof, it would still be no evidence that flesh may not writhe and quiver under the torture, although the whip never touched it, but was only shaken, with a kind of savage playfulness and sportive ferocity, over it—with the agonising malignity that spares.

It is conceded then that the force of imagination may be sufficiently sharp and strong to abolish all distinctions between the threat of punishment and the actual infliction of it. We know that the creature formed of flesh and blood, and neither cast in bronze, nor carved in alabaster, does, when desired to consider himself horsewhipped, consider himself horsewhipped. We know, that it is only necessary for a sensitive mortal compound, strung as he must be with nerves and fibres, to see the lash flourishing about him, in order to feel it smartly laid on ; to feel it even across his heart.

But this is not all : for this acute and positive impression is shared by everybody. Just as he considers, all mankind considers. One man is of opinion that he



has horsewhipped somebody; another man fully believes that he has been horsewhipped; and the whole world is prepared to make depositions of the fact, though nothing of the kind has in reality taken place.

Here then there is an extraordinary agreement, a unanimity quite wonderful, to acknowledge the power of imagination. The hero of the lash, having gone through the mock ceremony, stands in the situation of one who has vigorously applied it. The defenceless wight who has never been struck, is in the situation of one who has been disgracefully flagellated; and the public, who have seen nothing, are in the situation of eye-witnesses of the infliction. The whipped man, more especially, is perfectly convinced that he could show you the marks of the lash—his imaginary scars—and bruises, rainbow-coloured by a potent fancy; but nobody on earth requires such proofs, or entertains the slightest doubt of the event.

It follows therefore from this; that we are now in a position to inquire whether many other ceremonies equally unsuppressable, and equally unpleasant as flogging, may not in like manner be both recognised and evaded, by the same easy, intelligible, and popular exercise of the imagination. Much that is necessary to be done among the disagreeables of daily life, might thus be quietly supposed to have taken place, to the relief of the parties in the assumed proceeding, and to nobody's injury, so long as nobody discredits the genuineness of the transaction. A convenient assumption is quite as good as a fact; but the assumption must be unanimous.

Let it once be admitted that a flagellation ought to take place, and nothing can be more delicate, humane, or enlightened, than the policy described in the injunction, "Consider yourself horsewhipped;" the man with a whole skin, believing himself, without the slightest

mental reservation, to have been scarified on the spot. It is only necessary to elicit the same enthusiastic and spontaneous concurrence of sentiment in relation to fifty other duties, ceremonies, and circumstances, of constant occurrence in society, that prevails upon this point—to divest our fellow-creatures of half their worst toils, to rid them of half their galling grievances, and thus to lengthen by one-half their term of honourable enjoyment in life.

How superior in a thousand instances would be the operation of this imaginative influence, and this unshakeable moral belief, to the clumsy and eccentric laws fashioned by the wisdom of Parliaments. Take a solitary example. How laborious, intricate, and, after all, abortive, is the whole machinery of insolvency laws, compared with the practice which must be put in force were the system adverted to established! What would then be required? Simply what common sense requires:—that the debtor should call upon his creditor, shake a purse over his head or an empty pocket in his face, exclaiming at the same time in the presence of witnesses, “Consider yourself paid!” the creditor instinctively admitting that he had received the last farthing, and the spectators avouching that they all saw the money put down.

What is supposable of payments by lash, may be as readily understood of payments in cash. In fact, it is but putting the imaginative faculty a little further to the stretch than we do now, extending that implicit belief with which we have already taught ourselves to look upon six inches of flimsy, perishable paper, and to consider we have got indestructible gold.

But this is anticipating. We should rather begin by extending the convenient assumption from the whip to the pistol; and clearly, if it can be admissible with any

practical effect, in one case, it is admissible in the other. Thus, although we cannot abolish the evil of duelling, we can abolish all the most painful, tragic, and unchristian part of the practice at a blow. Imagination might snap its bloodless fingers, instead of hair-triggers, in the face of matter-of-fact. Let it be clearly understood that the unavoidable meeting takes place according to regulations dictated by the nicest honour on both sides; let the parties confront each other with the composure natural to gentlemen and men of courage; and all formalities being adjusted, let one consider that he has a shattered knee-pan, while the other considers that a bullet has lodged in his left clavicle. This is as easy as letter-writing, or levelling horse-pistols after they have actually been loaded.

Those who object that none of us would consider the duellists in such a case to be maimed and wounded, must be prepared to answer how it is, that we all so miraculously agree in the case of the horsewhip that has never been within the thong's length of the shoulders known and acknowledged to be scourged.

So facile is the power of supposition, that it is within every man's ability to suppose a shot through the brain, or to institute, if necessary, an imaginary widow and a bereaved family: and thus, the ferocity, the anguish, the demoralising influences of duelling may be, by a simultaneous action, sudden as magic, effectually suppressed.

If then we can so readily imagine, first, a flogging with the whip, though nobody has been struck; and next, the death of a duellist by pistol-shot, though no pistol has been discharged; what is to prevent us from supposing, and from putting the same degree of trust and confidence in the supposition, that a great battle has been fought between two powerful nations, and that

five thousand on either side lie dead on the field ! Granting the expediency of hostilities between two countries of the first class—say France and England—because, in an island as insignificant as it is remote, a squabble occurs, which, if it happened in either of the two countries, would have been adjusted by a police magistrate in a week : yet we need not therefore grant the expediency of the actual expenditure of powder and shot, while the great doctrine of imaginary fighting continues to be acted upon in any one case with success. Assume a battle, but have it not. Why, indeed, should war, the most expensive, gigantic, and enduring of all evils, be almost the only one known to states, or adopted as part of their practice, in which there is no particle of fiction ; in which that useful and ubiquitous agent, assumption, is totally unemployed !

When a new law is to be passed, or an old one repealed, twenty convenient things are supposed, by the highest, most moral, and most religious heads in the land, that of the keeper of the royal conscience leading them. When a question of diplomacy is to be settled, the fictions always out-number the facts ; and each party officially expects the other to imagine a variety of matters which he would scorn to suppose himself ; each diplomatist supposing besides, that his adversary little supposes what his real intentions are. If a treaty is to be negotiated, the supposes are as multifarious as the conditions, and imagination is as much taxed as matter-of-fact ; the first is relied upon when the advantages are to be proved, while the second regulates the concessions.

On all occasions of state-policy, whether in affairs civil or ecclesiastical—as in every species of diplomatic intercourse between country and country (provided they are highly civilised, and the ministers statesmen of the



first order), the most enormous fictions are those which it is etiquette to use first, and the more flagitious the falsehood the more gracefully and undauntedly is it advanced. The rule is, on either side, to make the desirable appear the true, and when neither of the powers is found practising trickery, it is certain that the arts of deception on both sides are exhausted.

Now while in law there is no assumption too gross and extravagant for adoption—while in statesmanship and diplomacy fictions the most monstrous are held in flattering regard, by people who are miracles of honesty—why is it that all these lawyers, statesmen, and courtiers should combine to exclude the army and navy from such benefits! Why not introduce the grand machinery of pure fiction into the military system, set up the whole art of lying at the War-office, and establish the sham-fight principle at the Horse Guards! As the whole system, save the war-system with real cannon and fixed bayonets, is clearly between governments and the people, as between nation and nation, a system of make-believe, why not, in the name of reason (if the word be still English), extend it to army and navy! How economical would be the fiction here! A single lie—the mere effort, that is to say, of imagining that a brilliant campaign had taken place—would lower taxation. And then what a saving of life, what a treasuring up of brave young blood, what an escape from the stifling, the world-darkening smoke of carnage, would result from it!

Truly, when, under the best laws, we find so many devices of legislation working to crush us, and we are told that they are intended to save us—when we have experience of so many restrictive influences which cripple and bind us down, while we are assured that the true effect of them is to add to our happiness and liberty—

and when we are expected to *believe* this, as many of us do—surely there can be no difficulty at any time in imagining the most splendid and extensive military operations, greatly to the profit and the glory of the nation. The people of this country, though not eminently of an imaginative character, could suppose a Battle of Waterloo any day, if they could but thereby save the war expenses.

Englishmen, we have just remarked, are not distinguished for their imaginative eminence among nations; and yet let it be acknowledged, that there is a sufficient development of that lively, far-looking, and fondly-believing feeling which is nearly allied to it, pervading the country in these days, to justify the highest hopes that the doctrine we are advocating will spread widely and sink deeply into the national mind. The public can already “consider” on many points with considerable aptitude for conversion. They evince the most promising credulity, and afford a prospect that they will ultimately, by sharp practice, become perfectly able to believe whatever is convenient.

The uses of a system likely to bring such blessings upon society can require no argument or eulogy. All, for example, will admit it to be desirable that when men are miserable they should be in a condition to consider themselves comfortable. Now to this happy point millions have already attained. At this moment there are thousands and tens of thousands in many gay places of the land, who are giving striking proofs of their progress towards the highest imagination; who, having been for hours at a polka-party, consider that they have danced the polka—who, feeling sufficiently dreary, consider that they are quite delighted—and who, at four in the morning, having found a cheesecake under the table, consider that they have supped. There is hope

that the grave, solid English character will yet catch wings from imagination and colour from romance.

The same credulity is everywhere manifested in matters of greater, indeed of the greatest importance. For an example of pre-eminent interest, take education. The parent considers that his children are highly educated, for the half-yearly bills have been high. The Rev. Mr. Q., or the Misses X., undertake to instil every species of knowledge, and every principle of moral discipline and righteousness (in unlimited quantities) into the tender mind; and the children, consequently, are presumed to have fed on blessings as well as cold veal. He always will and must consider that his boy has a highly cultivated mind, and his girl incorruptible principles as well as brilliant accomplishments; for he looks to his account, and sees that he has paid the charges for these things in full.

To show that a grand stretch of the imagination is no very *uncommon* thing, a glance at a very common custom is sufficient. Consider yourself honoured! is as efficacious as Consider yourself horsewhipped! The recipient of the supposed honour, like the receiver of the supposed thrashing, believes; and the bystanders in thousands evince the same credulity, having an entire faith in that which has no existence.

Case in point. When a decent illiterate man, who, having amassed money by vending nails or ribbons, can fortify his position by civic friendships, and surround himself with evidences of "respectability"—soup-tureens and a saddle-horse—is elected alderman, and constituted a magistrate, he "considers himself" an administrator of the laws of his country—which he has never read, and knows not where to find: and in like manner, when some rustic Wronghead, by virtue of his possession of sundry preserves and county patronage,

finds that he can write the two letters, J. P., he considers himself a dispenser of justice, and an infallible guardian of the peace;—and some people are so far below the common level of independence and intelligence, as to look at the justice of the peace in the same considerate light in which, by the conceit of imagination, he views himself.

Another custom, not less common and undeviating in town and country, supplies as forcible a proof of the ease with which imagination may be brought to play upon fact, like water worked from a distant river through concealed channels, and poured upon a fire.

A fine young gentleman, with nothing particular to recommend him, but the incident of his being twenty-one years of age on Tuesday, presents himself on Wednesday to his father's tenantry, and at first sight proves so irresistible as to be elected a Member of Parliament then and there. No sooner is this ceremony performed, and it is as short as the absence of question and answer can make it, than he comes up to town, or travels here and there, everywhere considering himself as a Representative of the People:—which is quite a different thing, and which he cannot, without a prodigious pressure upon the supposititious principle, be accounted. He takes his seat in the House of Commons, and thenceforward regards himself, and is regarded, as a law-giver, which, if Lycurgus was one, he, strictly speaking, is not! But the thing is not the less supposed: some inaudible voices, potent with the suffrage, have said, "Consider yourself a legislator," and all parties at once concur in the delusion. Few tricks of imagination can be carried much further than this.

The examples cited speak for a hundred. It is of daily note, that honour is dispensed just as the horse-



whip is flourished :—there is a little dallying, but no legitimate descent so as to leave an impression. The dignity, like the disgrace, is assumed.

It is not always safe to assume, excellent as the principle of assumption is, exactly what is passing in the mind of an acquaintance ; but it would seem that some people of whom we know a little, must have been told to consider themselves buried, by their never being alive to any thing, or doing the least good in life, where so much is every moment to be done.

The supposition system is undisguisedly introduced into some of our courts of justice. Look, for instance, at the invariable ceremony with which a court-martial terminates when a verdict of guilty is returned, and a reprimand is the award. The president addressing the defendant, and announcing that the court has ordered him to be severely reprimanded, uniformly adds, “ And you *are* severely reprimanded,” which concludes the affair.

This is saying, “ The court orders you to be punished, and you must consider yourself punished—we have nothing more to say to you !” No reprimand is delivered ; the president uses no lash in the language he employs ; he talks no strip of skin off the prisoner’s back ; he utters no rebuke an hour long, stinging him all over ; he chokes him with no hard, bitter words ; he burns no ineffaceable stigma into his flesh ; but, on the contrary, politely informs him that he is reprimanded, and leaves him to suppose the terms of the unspoken rebuke as may be most agreeable to himself. How a sentence can be more imaginary, it is difficult to conceive, the punishment being limited to the bare announcement of it. It is well that the culprit is officially informed that the reprimand he does not hear is a severe one, or he might never be able to consider himself severely reprimanded.

If strict military honour can thus be satisfied, and sacred justice be fulfilled, while everybody's feelings are humanely spared by the reprimand being left to the imagination, why should not the same excellent principle be tried in the case of corporal punishments, and the cat-o'-nine-tails be as the cat in the fairy tale, entirely a creature of the fancy ! Nay, if a man is to consider himself reprimanded when not a word has been spoken, why may not another be indulged with permission to consider himself hanged, omitting the ceremony of the rope. The fiction would not be less grave or effective for issuing from the lips of a judge. "The sentence is, that you be hanged by the neck, and you *are* hanged ;" the offender thenceforth supposing himself to be always in a state of suspension.

Nor is this doctrine to be battered down by the ridicule to which in too many respects it palpably lies open. Very true, the facetious might invite one to assumed banquets, saying, "I have given you an invitation, and you may consider that you have dined with me," sitting one down to much imaginary game, and to vinous draughts, purely supposititious. Nor is it to be urged in objection that the patron might say to his petitioner, suing for a place, "Consider yourself engaged," though place there was none ; because this would be but the continuance of a practice existing time out of memory.

Nor is it to be said that a grasping low-minded attorney (a creature that crawls everywhere about this metropolis), under a system which took so much for granted, and drew so largely on credulity, would fasten more wolfishly than ever on his client, by canting in the popular language, "Consider me as your friend !" and thereby preying upon the honest with greater security and despatch. This objection fails at once, because under no conceivable state of things, can the supposition be entertained, that a client not crazed

would consider anything so utterly irreconcilable with reason and experience. These are things that cannot be supposed—they are too monstrous. Belief must have its limits: if it were once to pass that point, it must be boundless for ever, and incredulity have no place in the mind.

Nor is there greater apprehension that in the coming day, when things which are in any respect disagreeable shall be imagined instead of performed, a cautious host would dream of sparing his cellar by suggesting to his guests that they should consider themselves drunk at the emptying of the first bottle, instead of opening the other dozen. And even if such a frisk of the fancy were once resorted to, it would not be without its parallel, as is well known to the visitors of that Bacchanalian enthusiast and inveterate drinker, who, when friends met at his board, placed a bottle of wine on the table, locked the room-door, put the key in his pocket, and looking round exultingly at the assembled seven, extravagantly cried, “None of ye are going, till all *that’s* gone!” The desperate Anti-Mathewite and truly jolly dog! Who would not wish to have been of the party!

The worst that could happen, if the principle contended for were everywhere in practice, would be matched in the past; the imagination being already as much strained for bad, as it would then be for good purposes. What can be more difficult than for a couple of boys to look upon themselves in the light of one—a single boy! The Siamese could not have done it. And yet an advertisement has appeared in the journals in these words—“Wanted two apprentices, who may consider themselves as one of the family.” At dinner-time, too! It shall go hard when the “considering” plan comes into fair play, but we will have the tables

turned, and one apprentice considering himself as hungry as two of the family, every morning at breakfast.

Above all, it is desirable to remember, that before the new doctrine can be universally acted upon, a simple rule must be laid down—it is this: that the principle of supposing occurrences, and giving effect to them as if they had really happened, applies solely and entirely to painful, toilsome, troublesome, and unprofitable affairs: and is never to be allowed scope, or to be admitted as a law, when the matter on hand is of a gay, easy, and exhilarating kind. All business of an agreeable nature, every ceremony calculated to delight, is to be performed as usual; but when the duty is a decided bore, and the discharge of it painful to the feelings, the performance is to be presumed by popular consent, as in the well-known civil whip-case, and the military ceremony of the reprimand: “Consider yourself horsewhipped!” “And you *are* reprimanded!”















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